



# Early Literacy Tutor Professional Learning Framework

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## Introduction

This Framework for Professional Learning is part of the National Student Support Accelerator’s Professional Learning Toolkit for Early Literacy Tutors<sup>1</sup> which consists of the following three sections:

- This Framework for Professional Learning that describes and provides resources for implementation of three recommended modes of professional learning, all with an understanding of and commitment to [Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education](#):
  - [Practice-based Formal Learning](#)
  - [Feedback and Individualized Coaching](#)
  - [A Community of Support and Social Learning](#)
- An [Early Literacy Tutor Training Recipe Book](#) that offers learning goals and critical ingredients in the four core content areas needed to build a strong scope and sequence of training, before tutors are working directly with students.
  - Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education
  - Building Relationships with Young Children
  - How Children Learn to Read and How Adults Teach Them to Do So
  - Supporting the Whole Child
- An [Early Literacy Tutor Continuous Learning Resource Bank](#) to support early literacy tutoring providers and districts in the ongoing professional learning of tutors, once they have begun instructing students. These resources are also organized by the same four core content areas listed above.

The ingredients in our [Early Literacy Tutor Training Recipe Book](#) and [Continuous Learning Resource Bank](#) offer content to build tutors’ knowledge, while this Professional Learning Framework addresses how providers engage tutors with that content. It also helps clarify how tutors’ practice -- during both their preparation to tutor and their tutoring with students -- can be the most important source of their learning, if well-structured.

All resources included in this framework are open-source, available for free use by all. We have vetted and selected these resources because they meet two or more of the following criteria:

- Early literacy tutoring providers or experts in the field recommended them.
- They align with an evidence-based approach to language and literacy instruction. Resources on topics related to important educational needs of the whole child, beyond language and literacy, are evidence-based and honor the child’s full humanity.
- Resources related to professional learning align with an evidence-based approach to educator training and the continuous development of adult learners.

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<sup>1</sup> These resources and materials are based on a review of relevant research from the field of teacher education and professional learning and interviews conducted with early literacy tutoring providers.

## Executive Summary

The core recommendations of this framework are that tutoring providers plan and implement three modes of professional learning, all with an understanding of and commitment to [Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education](#):

- [Practice-based Formal Learning](#)
- [Feedback and Individualized Coaching](#)
- [A Community of Support and Social Learning](#)

Equity is a foundational element of high-impact tutoring and should be built in throughout a tutoring provider's efforts. The Accelerator's resources throughout this Toolkit are aligned with culturally responsive-sustaining education (CR-SE). To this end, the Accelerator recommends embedding four key principles into tutor professional learning to support CR-SE including creating a welcoming and affirming environment, maintaining high expectations and rigorous instruction, using inclusive curriculum and embedding ongoing CR-SE professional development across all three modes of professional learning.

Research supports and the Accelerator recommends that the bulk of an early literacy tutor's professional learning be practice-based. Adapting Teacher Education by Design's learning cycle (Introduce, Prepare, Enact and Analyze) for tutor professional learning provides an easy to use framework for practice-based learning for tutors.

Feedback and individualized coaching is often named by successful tutoring organizations as the key to strong outcomes for students. The success of this type of professional learning relies on a clear understanding of the role of the coach, a trusting relationship between the coach and the tutor, clearly defined goals and specific tools for feedback. There are several approaches (directive, dialogical and facilitative) that coaches may need to employ depending on the specific goals for the tutor's development.

The third mode of professional learning is a Community of Practice. This mode of professional learning builds a sense of community amongst a tutoring provider's tutors so that they can learn from and support each other. A number of platforms exist to support communities of practice and there are several approaches to developing a successful community of practice.

A strong training program includes all three of these modes of professional learning – practice-based, feedback and individualized coaching and communities of practice. We hope these resources provide the information needed to develop a successful professional learning program for your early literacy tutoring program.

## A Commitment to Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education

The Accelerator’s aspiration is that tutoring is one component of an education that creates students who:

- Build academic competence and achieve academic success,
- Build or maintain cultural competence, and
- Build sociopolitical consciousness so that they are able to critique the larger norms, values, policies, and institutions that produce and maintain inequities.

These aspirations are grounded in the early scholarship of key figures like Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Tyrone C. Howard and Jackie Jordan Irvine. Ladson-Billings’ six year study of teachers who were successful in educating African-American students is particularly instructive to us. Her research revealed the aspirations above as key to a successful teacher’s practice (Billings, 1995).

Research over the past 26 years continues to provide evidence of Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE) as efficacious for promoting positive student outcomes (Billings, 1995; Richardson, 2003; Willis et al., 2008; Ball & Tyson, 2011; Kinloch, 2011; Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014; Kinloch, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2013; Baker-Bell, 2020). CR-SE is shown to correlate with increased academic success as evidenced by higher test scores, increased attendance and graduation rates, increased confidence in intellectual abilities, and deepening civic and community engagement.

To arrive at this aspiration, the Accelerator suggests tutoring providers:

1. Provide tutors resources from the [Early Literacy Tutor Training Recipe Book](#) and the [Continuous Learning Resource Bank](#) to help them work toward CR-SE education goals.
2. Follow the suggestions in this Framework for implementing each mode of professional learning with a commitment to CR-SE, so that tutors can learn from the resources noted above. The suggestions included throughout the Framework help providers model seeing tutors’ diverse identities and cultures as assets in how they structure their training and ongoing learning. Within each of the sections of this Framework look for the following areas that specifically address CR-SE:
  - a. [Practice-based Formal Learning](#): The questions in Parts One, Two and Four of the Learning Cycle that ask tutors to reflect on how they are acting on a commitment to CR-SE
  - b. [Feedback and Individualized Coaching](#): The guidance for forming trusting relationships between coaches and tutors, a requirement for providers committed to CR-SE
  - c. [A Community of Social Learning and Support](#): The note on the important role a supportive community can play for tutors striving to act on commitments to CR-SE and a link to resources for building caucus and affinity group spaces
3. Understand that staff cannot coach what they don’t know and commit the provider’s leadership and coaches to their own education on CR-SE, ideally before working with tutors on the same. The New York State Department of Education, with the support of an expert committee, created a [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#) that defined CR-S education as “grounded in a cultural

view of learning and human development in which multiple expressions of diversity (e.g., race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized and regarded as assets for teaching and learning” (2019). The committee articulated four principles -- or ways that a commitment to CR-S education might show up in educational settings. We suggest you read how they define each principle and then use their recommendations for district leaders (2019, pp. 36-39) as inspiration for how leaders of tutoring organizations can act. We recommend the following key actions for tutoring organizations:

- **Create a Welcoming and Affirming Environment:** “A welcoming and affirming environment feels safe. It is a space where people can find themselves represented and reflected, and where they understand that all people are treated with respect and dignity. The environment ensures all cultural identities (i.e. race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, socioeconomic background) are affirmed, valued, and used as vehicles for teaching and learning” (p. 14). To build a welcoming and affirming environment for all tutors in your environment, we suggest:
  - Work to improve the recruitment and retention of a diverse tutor and staff workforce (i.e. tutors and staff who identify as people of color, LGBTQIA+, differently-abled) by strengthening pipelines and cultivating relationships with local and national partners (e.g. historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic association of colleges and universities, alliance organizations, community organizations, faith-based organizations, cultural centers, etc.).
  - Disaggregate data (e.g. tutor enrollment, training, performance, etc.) by sub-group, evaluate trends, and create a strategic plan to address disproportionality.
  - Stay current on wider social and political issues that affect communities served by the tutoring provider (e.g. hold regular meetings with community-based organizations and advocacy groups, create a community liaison role to gather information from the field, etc.).
  
- **Maintain High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction:** “High expectations and rigorous instruction prepare the community for rigor and independent learning. The environment is academically rigorous and intellectually challenging, while also considering the different ways students learn. Instruction includes opportunities to use critical reasoning, take academic risks, and leverage a growth mindset to learn from mistakes. Messages encourage positive self-image and empower others to succeed” (p. 15). To act on high expectations and offer rigorous instruction for all tutors in your environment, we suggest:
  - Strategize instructional methods to disrupt any disparities in tutor outcomes that exist across lines of difference, highlighting and sharing best practices from the field.
  - Facilitate structures for tutor collaboration, i.e. peer observations, school visits, purposeful partnerships, mentors.

- Partner with experts in the field (i.e. professional learning organizations, higher education, consultants) to identify research-based, instructional strategies that are most effective in advancing tutor and student academic success.
- **Use an Inclusive Curriculum:** “Inclusive curriculum and assessment elevate historically marginalized voices. It includes opportunities to learn about power and privilege in the context of various communities and empowers learners to be agents of positive social change. It provides the opportunity to learn about perspectives beyond one’s own scope. It works toward dismantling systems of biases and inequities, and decentering dominant ideologies in education” (p. 15). To ensure an inclusive curriculum for all tutors in your environment, we suggest:
  - Ensure professional learning includes culturally authentic learning experiences that mirror tutors’ ways of learning, understanding, communicating, and demonstrating curiosity and knowledge.
  - Adopt curriculum that highlights contributions and includes texts reflective of the diverse identities of students and tutors and reframes the monocultural framework that privileges the historically advantaged at the expense of other groups.
- **Embed Ongoing Professional Learning:** “Ongoing professional learning is rooted in the idea that teaching and learning is an adaptive process needing constant reexamination (Moll, et al., 1992; Gay, 2010). It allows learners to develop and sharpen a critically conscious lens toward instruction, curriculum, assessment, history, culture, and institutions. Learners must be self-directed and take on opportunities that directly impact learning outcomes” (p. 15). To provide ongoing professional learning for all tutors, we suggest:
  - Train and build the capacity of instructional leaders to support tutors in delivering instruction that is rigorous, student-centered, and promotes students as agents of positive social change.
  - Provide Professional Learning Communities and other professional learning structures to address bias, develop racial literacy skills, etc.

## Practice-based Formal Learning

The National Student Support Accelerator recommends that the majority of the training for tutors be *practice-based*, meaning tutors are learning to implement the instructional and relational routines that they will teach to and use with students. This approach contrasts with lectures, workshops, or other modes of theory-based pedagogy. Further, we recommend that any formal professional learning sessions you offer once tutors are working with students remain practice-based.

All early literacy providers interviewed relied heavily on practice-based models of formal learning for their tutor training (e.g., analyzing live and video-based models; using rehearsals and other forms of practice, often with feedback from staff; etc.). Only one program has been able to overcome the hurdle of obtaining student permissions in order to have tutors record video footage of themselves to review and learn from, but most programs expressed desire to incorporate that pedagogy into their program in the future. To overcome this barrier and be able to use footage of tutoring session as part of practice-based formal learning, providers can consider (from most to least ideal):

- Asking caregivers to sign releases for filming before tutoring begins. Ensure releases clarify that footage will be used for tutor learning purposes only and will be kept behind a firewall.
- Setting up the recording device so that it only captures the tutor's face/image and not the student's.
- Using video blurring software to blur out students' faces.

All programs interviewed ask tutors to learn from the science of reading research base; some ask tutors to read/watch/digest research in an asynchronous course first and then reference that as they learn how to implement their tutoring program. Others give tutors bite-size pieces of research in the context of learning how to implement their tutoring sessions. Either approach can work. Our recommendation is that resources that teach important theory or deliver key pieces of knowledge are tightly linked to the specific tutoring instructional routines for which tutors will have to apply that knowledge.

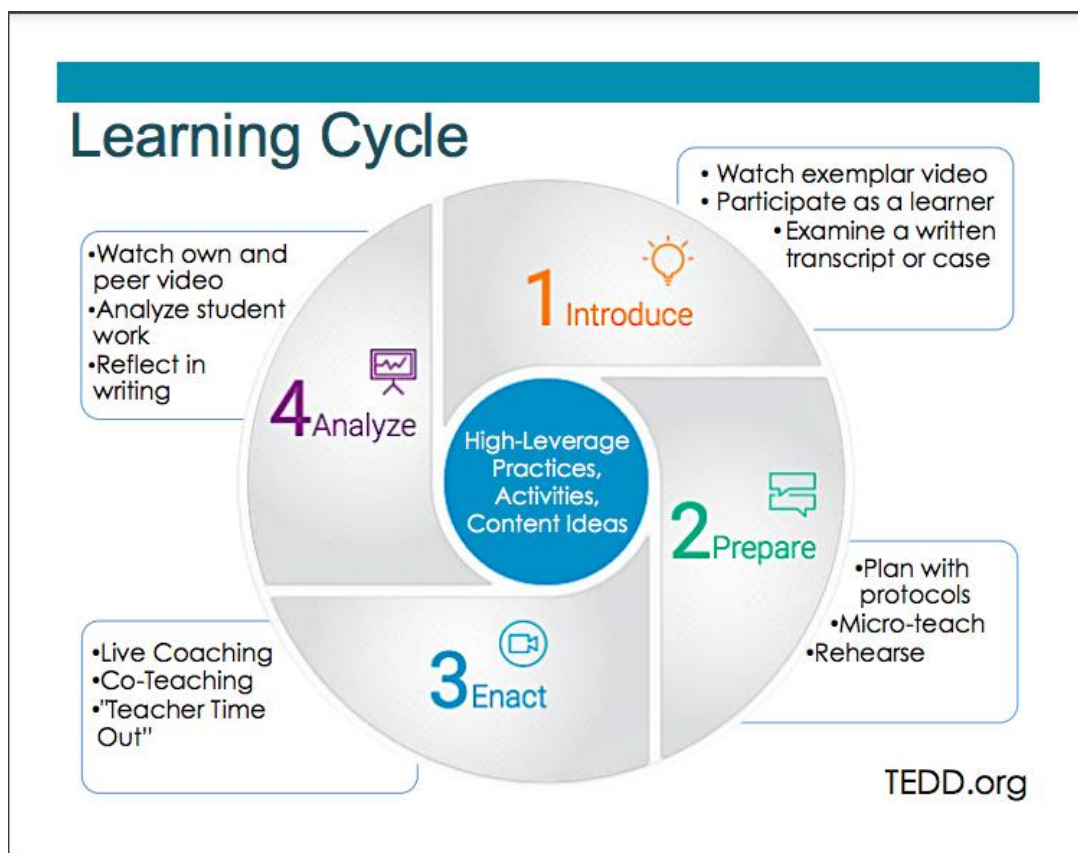
These practice-based methods of formal learning are similar to what research in teacher education has found to be effective (Ball & Forzani, 2011; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017; Grossman et al., 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Lampert, 2010; Lampert et al., 2010; Lampert et al. 2013; Lampert & Graziani, 2009; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanaugh, 2013). To operationalize the work, we suggest a four-part learning cycle to structure practice-based formal learning that is based on the work of Teacher Education by Design ([TEDD](#)), a project of The University of Washington's College of Education.

### The Learning Cycle: An Overview

The graphic below, from [TEDD](#), offers a visual representation of a four-part learning cycle. We make a slight adjustment to the center of the learning cycle -- what's to be practiced -- to make it most relevant to tutoring providers. Tutors practice the instructional activities, routines, or interventions unique to their tutoring program, as well as the particular moves or pedagogies they are expected to use as they implement those routines with students.

A typical tutoring session might include a handful of such routines. For example, for each session tutors might use a socio-emotional check-in routine, a phonemic awareness game, a sound/spelling direct instruction routine, a word and sentence blending routine, a dictation routine, and a fluency text reading routine. Tutors learn each routine they will use with students by engaging in a complete cycle of learning. Each quadrant of the learning cycle represents a phase of professional learning, with associated activities that support tutors to learn from the practice of tutoring.


When introduced to the routine, tutors learn the pedagogies they are expected to use. For example, they might learn how to accurately model the production of sounds, how to guide student practice, and when and how to correct student errors or ask students to elaborate on their thinking. These pedagogical moves embed in the practice of the routines that are specific to a tutoring program.





As TEDD has structured it, each quadrant of the learning cycle has associated pedagogies that teacher educators use. These pedagogies can be used within tutor professional learning without much adaptation. Reflection is a feature of quadrants 1, 2, and 4.




### The Learning Cycle

**Introduce**  First, teachers are introduced to some aspects of practice such as an instructional activity, disciplinary content ideas, embedded core practices of ambitious teaching. Teachers learn about the activity and develop a lens for noticing important features of ambitious teaching. Teacher educators might introduce the activity by modeling teaching, showing a video representation of teaching, or engaging teachers in the activity as learners.

**Prepare**  Next, teachers prepare to engage students in the instructional activity. Teachers collaborate to think more deeply about the routine structure of the activity, plan for how they will engage students in this work, and try out their plan. Rehearsals are one way that teacher educators can provide space for teachers to approximate enactment. In a rehearsal, teachers can try on the practices of ambitious teaching in a safe space with access to the thinking of peers and teacher educators.

**Enact**  Then teachers enact the activity with students. Building on their planning and rehearsal of the activity, teachers must respond to live, in-the-moment interactions, developing adaptive expertise. The students' ideas and interactions become a resource for teachers to learn from. Teacher educators may support and mediate this experience through co-teaching, live coaching, or teacher time out.

**Analyze**  Afterwards, teachers revisit and learn from their enactments, making sense of the complex practices at play. Teachers collaborate around artifacts of practice that emerge during enactment, such as videos or student work, to better understand student learning and how it is supported by core practices of ambitious teaching. Through this analysis, teachers begin to develop shared visions practices of ambitious teaching in relation to actual classroom experience.

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Typically, the learning cycle bridges across tutors' training and ongoing professional learning time periods. Quadrants 1 and 2 of the learning cycle begin in training, but quadrants 3 and 4 can begin only once tutors are working with students. If you are not able to teach tutors all of the instructional routines that they will use with students before they begin, then you can take any routine that tutors haven't learned through a full learning cycle after they have begun working with their students. TEDD encourages the work of Quadrant 4 to happen in group settings, so that educators can collaborate and learn from one another. Providers might choose to structure Quadrant 4 this way, or for logistical or other reasons, might need this analysis to happen between a tutor and coach. If providers choose this latter option, the work of Quadrant 4 can become a tool used in [Feedback and Individualized Coaching](#).

## Adapting The Learning Cycle for Tutor Professional Learning: A Closer Look at Planning and Implementation

Now that you have an overview of the learning cycle, continue reading for a more in-depth look at how you might plan for and implement the learning cycle with tutors. This learning cycle is most relevant when you are introducing new instructional routines to tutors; it can also be used when tutors need to refresh or refine an instructional routine about which they have previously learned.

### Planning for The Learning Cycle

- To plan Part One (Introduce):
  - Select the instructional routine, activity, or intervention you want tutors to learn or refine.

- Gather relevant research related to this instructional routine, to help tutors understand the evidence-base for the content and pedagogy of the routine and build some judgment about why it works. Make sure that the research you choose is user-friendly for your tutor population. Consider resources in the [Early Literacy Tutor Training Recipe Book](#) and the [Continuous Learning Resource Bank](#).
  - Secure a video model of a tutor or staff member enacting the instructional routine, or prepare someone to model it live (with or without students or tutors participating as students).
  - Create a few questions that help focus tutors' attention on the structure of the instructional routine. For example: students' learning goals, what tutors do/what students do, what content students are learning, how students will demonstrate what they can do at the end of the session, etc.
- To plan Part Two (Prepare):
    - Establish norms to create a productive learning environment and to support tutors to make their tutoring practice public.
    - Decide what format the rehearsal should take (pairs, small group, whole group; rehearse all or part of the instructional routine; staff member embedded in each group or not; virtual or face-to-face), given the dynamics and needs of the group.
    - Consider what coaching moves might be helpful to use with this specific group of tutors, including:
      - directive (what to do next); evaluative (draw attention to tutor moves and how they are connected to student's learning); playing the part of student (offer up a challenge that will help support the group's learning); facilitate discussion (invite discussion about a problem of tutoring practice that emerged in the rehearsal)
  - To plan Part Three (Enact):
    - Ask tutors to implement the rehearsed instructional routine with students.
    - Ask tutors to gather the resulting student work (e.g., written dictation of words or sentences; a recording of a student blending words; a recording of a student's oral reading; a reader's response notebook entry; etc.).
    - Ask tutors to record video of the session, to be examined in Part Four.
    - Support tutors to learn how to gather recorded video so that the tutor and all students can be heard clearly, providing this support at first if needed.
    - Ensure students have provided appropriate permissions to be filmed, or ensure tutors have the camera aimed only at themselves. This latter option is only applicable for face-to-face tutoring models.
  - To plan Part Four (Analyze):
    - Decide whether to do one or both:
      - View and discuss a volunteer tutor's video whole group
      - Each tutor views own video and processes (solo or with a coach)

- For whole group sessions, review the video of the session from the volunteer tutor and adapt a small number of questions specific to the session, so you can facilitate a productive conversation.
- For individual coaching sessions, ask tutors to bring representative student work and their own video enactments. You may choose to review the tutor’s video or student work in advance to be better prepared.

## Implementing The Learning Cycle

### Part One: Introduce

- **What is the instructional routine, activity, or intervention?**
  - (Optional but recommended) Tutors engage in the instructional routine as a student
  - Read a step-by-step summary or description of the structure or activity
- **Let’s decompose the instructional routine**
  - Small group & whole group discussions to “unpack” the routine, using some of the following questions:
    - What do you notice about the routine? What are its core components? What do tutors do? What do students do?
    - What was the content being worked on (the phonemic awareness, the phonics, the language structure, the knowledge conveyed through text, etc.)?
    - Where do you see high expectations within this routine?
    - Were students’ identities valued in this routine? How can students’ identities, languages, and home cultures be used as a bridge to learning through this structure?
    - What moves can tutors make to support students to think, talk about, and practice with that content?
    - Do opportunities exist to build sociopolitical consciousness (or the ability to analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping society and one’s status in it) through this routine?
- **Let’s set / revisit norms for screening video**
  - *Set whatever norms the individual or team needs to screen video from an asset-based perspective. Some sample norms to consider are: (1) Assume there is much we don’t know about the children, the tutor, and their history together. (2) Focus on what children are doing, how they are engaging with the content and with each other. (3) Assume good intent on the tutor’s part.*
- **Let’s see the instructional routine in action**
  - Skim the plan matching the enactment of the instructional routine tutors will view (e.g, a specific tutoring session)
  - Choose one:
    - View a video of the routine being enacted with students through a specific session **OR**
    - Observe a live model of the routine being enacted through a specific session
  - Debrief the instructional routine in action, through pair, small group, or whole group discussion, using some of the following questions:

- What is the content students are asked to work on?
  - How does the routine allow children to share and build their ideas about that content?
  - Does the routine allow students multiple opportunities to practice? How so?
  - How does the content, and how children are working with it, support them toward mastery of the lesson's objective?
  - How does the tutor prompt for student thinking?
  - In what ways did the tutor's pacing support student engagement and learning? Were there missed opportunities?
  - In what ways does the tutor hold high expectations for all the children?
  - Were students' identities valued? How are student's identities, languages, and home cultures mirrored back to them and used as a bridge to learning?
  - Did opportunities exist to build sociopolitical consciousness (or the ability to analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping society and one's status in it)? How were they seized?
- **What are the purposes of the routine?**
    - Ask tutors to reflect independently, pair-share, and then have a few volunteers share with whole group:
      - What benefits can this routine afford students?
      - What benefits can this routine afford tutors (in service of students)?
    - (If relevant for your program) What ideas from the research you read/viewed previously support the structure of this instructional routine?

## Part Two: Prepare

- **(If necessary) Let's revisit the routine in action**
  - *Take this step if significant time has passed since tutors engaged in Part One*
  - View another video or live model of the instructional routine in order to remind tutors of the structure's component parts, the content ideas children can work on through it, and the types of moves tutors make to support children's learning.
- **Let's prepare the instructional routine you'll rehearse within this session**
  - Read the objective or goal of the routine
  - Read the plan for the tutoring session and its routines and discuss:
    - What is the content students are asked to work on?
    - How does the routine allow children to share and build their ideas about that content?
    - Does the routine allow students multiple opportunities to practice? How so?
    - How does the content, and how children are working with it, support them toward mastery of the lesson's objective?
    - How does the tutor prompt for student thinking?
    - How can you hold high expectations for all students throughout this routine?
    - How can your children's identities, languages, and home cultures be present and valued in this lesson? How can they be used as a bridge for learning?
    - Do opportunities exist to build sociopolitical consciousness (or the ability to analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping society and one's status in it)? If so, are you prepared to maximize them with students?

- **Let's set / revisit norms for rehearsing**
  - Set norms that allow the team to make their practice public in order to grow and develop together.
    - *Set whatever norms are important for the team. People who have done this work often say it is important to have a norm around being descriptive of what children and tutors can do instead of using evaluative labels such as "high" or "low."*
  
- **Let's rehearse**
  - Tutors rehearse all or strategic portions of the instructional routine, in pairs, small groups, or whole group.
  - The facilitator may decide to interject or pause the rehearsal at certain moments to offer directive feedback (what to do next) or evaluative feedback (draw attention to tutor moves and how they are connected to students' learning).
    - It is not recommended that anyone but a named facilitator make these moves.
  - The facilitator and other tutors may play the part of a student (and offer up a challenge that will help support the group's learning), remembering to be generally cooperative with the tutor.
  - After the rehearsal, the facilitator invites group discussion about problems of practice that emerged in the rehearsal.

#### Part Three: Enact

- Tutors enact the lesson in their classroom community, capturing video footage and gathering resulting student work and ensuring this is representative of all children in the community.

#### Part Four: Analyze

- **Let's set / revisit norms for screening video**
  - [See Part One](#)
  
- **(If using) Let's screen and discuss a volunteer tutor's lesson**
  - Express appreciation to the volunteer!
  
  - Screen footage
    - If time allows, you can screen one time through to get the general flow of the instructional routine and on a second viewing, allow tutors to call out "pause" to share noticings and wonderings.
    - Consider using five focusing techniques to support tutors to learn from video, as outlined in [Evidence of Practice: Video-Powered Professional Learning](#), a book that offers 12 video-based strategies for facilitating professional development. This [Edthena blog post describes each focusing technique](#). These focusing techniques are neutral to *what* tutors are focusing on, but help tutors build skill at learning from video. Tutors can spot, break down, and interpret high expectations for all students, just as they can the gradual release of responsibility in a phonics instructional routine.
  
  - Facilitate discussion about the sample tutoring session. This discussion is not fishbowl, with the

volunteer guide answering the questions, but is intended to be in the whole group, using the sample session as a rich representation the whole group can deconstruct to advance learning.

Sample questions can include:

- What specific goals did the tutor have for this tutoring session? How did those goals play out in their enactment?
  - Did the tutor's enactment of the routine afford all students multiple opportunities to practice? Were there missed opportunities?
  - In what ways did the tutor's pacing support student engagement and learning? Were there missed opportunities?
  - How did the tutor respond to student thinking? Were there example interactions that advanced student understanding? Were there missed opportunities?
  - In what ways did this lesson support students to build or strengthen optimal mindsets about learning?
  - In what ways did this lesson hold high expectations for all students? What was the impact of those high expectations on students? Were there missed opportunities? What was the impact of missed opportunities on students?
  - In what ways were student's identities, languages, and home cultures present, affirmed, and used as a bridge for learning?
  - Were opportunities leveraged to build student's critical consciousness?
- 
- *(If using)* **Let's screen and discuss our own tutorials**
    - Tutors screen their own footage
    - Solo or with a coach, tutors reflect on that footage. The same sample questions used above can be considered.

## Feedback and Individualized Coaching

We strongly recommend using coaches to observe tutoring sessions, offer feedback, and provide coaching specific to individual tutors' needs. All early literacy tutoring providers that we interviewed employed coaches to support their tutors' ongoing development. Coaching is a powerful tool for improvement because it is personalized and focused on bite-sized bits of learning aligned to tutors' goals and to their demonstrated strengths and needs. It is also powerful because it builds a long-term relationship and can uncover the underlying beliefs and mindsets that may help or inhibit a tutor from supporting all students equitably.

A meta-analysis of teacher professional learning found that coaching produces large positive effects on teachers' instructional practice and smaller positive effects on student achievement (Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan, 2017). This meta-analysis found that pairing coaching with group training produces larger effects on both instructional practice and student achievement, suggesting that building baseline knowledge prior to engaging with a coach is beneficial. This finding supports recommendations within this framework.

The tutoring providers we interviewed varied in how they structured the coaching role and model and in the frequency of observation and follow-on coaching.

### Role of the Coach

All tutoring providers we interviewed use coaches to support tutors' ongoing professional learning. However, intended outcomes of the coaching vary based on key differences in how the tutoring programs are structured. Providers that have significant or complete control over what happens within tutoring sessions use their coaches primarily to improve the fidelity of their tutors' implementation of those sessions and their skillfulness in responding to students.

An example provider that uses its coaches this way is Reading Corps. Their coaches support tutors to implement reading interventions with fidelity, to deepen tutor understanding of why they are using particular interventions with particular students, given data, and to problem-solve student engagement issues. As Reading Corps provides these interventions to partnering sites and only partners with districts that agree to use them, it is sensible for their coaches to maximize tutors' capacity to implement them well.

Contrast this with the coaches at North Carolina Education Corps. Their tutors are placed in over 20 districts across the state, and each of those districts determines the specific instructional materials tutors use with students. As a result, NC Education Corps coaches primarily support tutors' self-reflection on matters of equity and on the quality of the relationships they are building with students and other stakeholders. These coaches do have a background in literacy and look for all the basic tutoring techniques during observations. But NC Education Corps coaches loop in local district coaches and support staff if they observe early literacy-specific concerns, as local districts support tutors on implementation of local tutoring materials. While this is a strikingly different choice from Reading Corps, it is equally sensible given the design of NC Education Corps tutoring model.

To view or download coach role descriptions from each of these partner organization, see:

- [Reading Corps' Coaching Specialist](#)
- [North Carolina Education Corps' Learning Coach Job Description](#)



## The Coach-Tutor Relationship

A coach and tutor are more likely to achieve goals together if they have formed a trusting relationship. Tutors have to make themselves vulnerable in order to open up their tutorials to observers and welcome their feedback on how it has gone. Tutors are more likely to do this if their coach knows them as a whole person, is committed to their growth, and is operating “from the same side of the table,” so to speak.

When coaching relationships are substantial enough, coaches can adjust how they offer affirmative and corrective feedback because they have an accurate understanding of who the tutor is and how that person receives feedback best. These authentic relationships take time to build, but are worth the investment. This is true in all cases and *especially* if coaches are striving to create a culturally responsive and sustaining education for their tutors and see all expressions of diversity as assets for teaching and learning.

How is such a trusting relationship built? We recommend coaches ground their relationship building in particular undergirding mindsets. These include, but aren’t limited to:

- Holding the tutors you coach with *unconditional positive regard*, meaning you value and accept them, just as they are, regardless of how they perform or achieve. This doesn’t mean that you don’t support them to improve their tutoring. That is your job! It does mean that your value of them *as a person* is not dependent on the quality of last week’s tutorial.
- Operating with *genuine care* for your tutors as people, meaning you make yourself approachable, you proactively demonstrate care, and you ask questions that show your desire to know them as whole people.
- Building *empathic understanding* for how tutors are doing, meaning you work to understand the thoughts, feelings, and perspective of your tutors, from their own frame of reference.
- Making yourself *open and vulnerable* by sharing (appropriately) about yourself, meaning you reveal what brought you to the work with students, the setbacks you have experienced and how you have managed them, and what brings you joy and energy. Relationships are a two-way street, and tutors will feel trust in someone who trusts them enough to share.
- Being *aware of and curious and vocal about your multiple identities and how they influence your work and your worldview*, meaning you are introspective about how your identities influence the relationships you build with tutors and the ways you perceive their efficacy, just as you encourage them to engage in similar introspection in their relationships with students; you openly name how you see your identities influencing your perspective on a situation; and you invite the tutors you coach to offer you input on the same.

For guidance and resources on how to build trusting relationships, all from the school/classroom context, consider:

- In [Literacy Coaching Advice: Cultivating Healthy Relationships with Teachers](#), author Bethanie Pletcher addresses ways that literacy coaches can form and sustain effective working relationships with teachers, pulling from firsthand experience and a review of the literacy on teacher/coach relationships. Guidance includes how to be visible, establish trust, and collaborate with teachers.
- Elena Aguilar applies social scientist Brene Brown’s research on shame and vulnerability to instructional coaching in the EdWeek blog [What is Trust? How Do We Build It?](#)



- In her EdWeek blogs, Noelle Apostol Colin describes [The Discomfort of Coaching While White](#) and how to do the self-work necessary to become more comfortable and effective coaching across lines of difference. In a second blog, she describes [3 Strategies for Effective Coaching Across Difference](#), coming from the perspective of a white coach working to be more effective for her clients of color.

For guidance and resources on how to build trusting relationships from other contexts, consider:

- Social scientist Brene Brown provides a range of resources that are relevant to relationship building on her webpage, including an animated short defining [Empathy](#), her popular Ted Talk on [The Power of Vulnerability](#), and her SuperSoul Session that defines [The Anatomy of Trust](#). Her [Dare to Lead Hub](#) goes even deeper, based on her book of the same name, to help leaders build four skill-sets that are teachable, observable, and measurable, including rumbling with vulnerability, living into our values, braving trust, and learning to rise. There are many tools here, and you could spend lots of time reading and listening, or you could look for ones that could stand alone in their usefulness to coaches, like “The Engaged Feedback Checklist” and “The Braving Inventory.”

With a trusting relationship, coaches are more likely to be successful observing tutors in sessions with students and then offering them feedback. This function of the coach was used across all tutoring providers we interviewed. Over the years, research studies have shown that cycles of observation and feedback strengthen teacher instructional practice and increase student achievement (Allen et al., 2011; Elish-Piper and L’Allier, 2011; Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan, 2018).

In our conversations with tutoring providers, the frequency of these cycles varies from every session (only one organization), to every other week, to once a quarter. Coaches observe tutors in both face-to-face and virtual delivery models. Most interviewed programs adjust the frequency of the observation/feedback cycle based on tutor need (in both skill and will).

For some programs, the move to a virtual delivery model during the COVID-19 pandemic required a second adult monitor to be present online, for safety purposes, and this enabled more observations of tutors than had been typical in an in-person model. These programs view the increased observations afforded to tutors in the virtual model as an advantage. Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan (2018) found no statistically significant difference in effect size between the in-person and virtual coaching of teachers, suggesting that virtual coaching models can maintain quality while increasing scalability for providers.

## Coaching Goals

After initial observations, most coaches work with the tutor to develop a goal or goals that will anchor their continuous learning and improvement efforts. The most helpful goals are **S.M.A.R.T** -- that is, they are:

- **Specific,**
- **Measurable,**
- **Attainable,**
- **Relevant, and**
- **Time-bound**

Coaches can structure future observation-feedback cycles to look for evidence of progress toward the goal(s). In addition to evidence related to the agreed upon goal(s), coaches can observe for and offer feedback on fidelity of tutoring session implementation.

## Tools for Feedback

What is feedback? According to Grant Wiggins (2012), feedback gives the learner specific information about how they are doing in their efforts to reach a goal. To facilitate this, some organizations use **performance rubrics** or **observation checklists** against which to offer feedback. For example:

- [Reading Corps' Phoneme Blending Intervention Integrity Observation Checklist](#) is a 10-item checklist that coaches use when observing tutors implementing one intervention. It includes a spot to summarize the tutor's strengths and areas for improvement. It offers suggestions the coach could offer the tutor immediately during the intervention, if the coach does not see progress.
- [Reading Rescue's Instructional Developmental Pathway](#) is a seven page document that outlines the full pathway to developing to proficient tutoring. It includes an administrative and instructional dimension for each routine in their tutoring sequence, as well as one overall rapport and management of the lesson section. Reading Rescue makes differentiated decisions about when to share this pathway with tutors, based on their readiness. From the full pathway, they developed [Reading Rescue's Checklist for an Effective Reading Rescue Lesson](#), which outlines the first stage of proficiency in an accessible way and is shared with tutors at every formal observation so they are clear on what is expected and on how they are doing relative to expectations. Both documents apply to virtual and in-person tutoring settings.
- [AARP Foundation's Experience Corps' Virtual Tutor Observation and Coaching Form](#) developed this four-page tool as a component of their process for promoting rigorous and consistent implementation of their tutoring model. It allows coaches to track important tutor behaviors across segments of the lesson and to make notes on areas for reinforcement, redirection, and recommendation in follow-up coaching. This tool is the virtual observation adaptation of an in-person observation tool.

From the K-3 ELA classroom setting, these **observation tools** might be helpful to adapt for the tutoring context:

- [LIFT Education Network's Instructional Practice Guide for K-5 Literacy](#) is a one-page observational tool that helps observers look for evidence as to whether students are engaged in the work of the lesson, whether the lesson is centered on a high-quality text(s), whether instruction and materials explicitly and systematically provide all students with the opportunity to master foundational skills, whether questions and tasks build students' comprehension of the text and its meaning, and whether students are responsible for doing the thinking.
- [Student Achievement Partners' K-2 Foundational Skills Observational Tool](#) is a five-page observational tool and discussion guide that offers a series of indicators coupled with concrete "look-fors" that signal effective foundational skills instruction. Though it includes a discussion guide to structure a follow-up conversation, the included questions are less relevant to tutoring providers, as they focus on putting the observed lesson in context of the broader unit and year.

From the broader K-12 educational context, several tutoring providers interviewed mentioned adapting **feedback tools** from the following organization:

- The six steps of effective feedback, from Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's book *Leverage Leadership*, which bills itself as answering the question: what do great school leaders do that separate them from the rest? For more context:

- [Review slide deck from Georgia Department of Education](#), which summarizes and briefly defines the six steps of effective feedback.
- [View videos and resources from EL Education](#), which includes several videos of feedback conversations with teachers and accompanying reflection questions.
- [Consider adapting or using this feedback guide from Insight Education Group](#), a way to structure a feedback conversation with an educator. This tool includes a blank template and one that includes prompts/sentence starters.

For programs that **operate virtually or that leverage video as part of practice-based formal learning**, consider downloading the [Best Foot Forward: Video Observation Toolkit](#). The toolkit includes four sections to help launch video observations in a school community, but is adaptable to tutoring contexts. Each section includes lessons from the Best Foot Forward project, a study of digital video in classroom observations, and adaptable tools for implementation.

## Coaching

While feedback gives learners information about how they are doing in their efforts to reach a goal, coaching aims to support learners to close the distance from their current state to the goal. In interviews we conducted, providers mentioned using a mix of methods of coaching, including directive, transformative, and performance-based, and most noted a desire to clarify, codify, and/or unify their own organization around a coherent model of coaching. The table below outlines a spectrum of approaches to coaching to help inform how providers articulate their coaching models. Providers don't have to commit to just one approach. Coaches might use the approaches flexibly to meet different people's needs or the same person's needs at different points in the year.

For example, for a tutor learning a fluency routine for the very first time, a coach might model the routine and analyze video clips of the routine being implemented with students. The coach might pause to point out the quick pace at which the routine unfolds and the ways in which the responsibility for fluent reading is gradually released to the student. Later in the year, the coach and tutor might jointly analyze one student's fluency data and trouble-shoot how to move that student off of a plateau in her reading fluency. The tutor brings unique insight into the student's strengths and needs and the coach uses her background in jumpstarting students' reading to ask targeted questions and make a few key suggestions. For more examples of the way a coach might interact differently with tutors in these three different approaches, see the table below.

### ***A Spectrum of Approaches to Coaching***

Adapted from *A Close-Up Look at Three Approaches to Coaching*, by Jim Knight and *Six Moves for Coaching in the Classroom*, by Diane Sweeney

	Directive	Dialogical	Facilitative
Goals	To master a prescribed set of pedagogies or skills	To accomplish a set of student-focused goals	To become aware of the answers the tutor has within him/herself
Role of Coach	To leverage expertise in order to help the tutor learn the correct way to implement a practice	To partner with tutors in inquiry and in pursuit of student-focused goals	To serve as a sounding board, awareness-raiser, and facilitator, to support the tutor in unpacking what s/he already knows

<b>Role of Tutor</b>	To implement guidance and feedback offered by coach, in order to improve their practice	To partner with coach in inquiry and in pursuit of goals	To unpack knowledge in partnership with a coach and to make all of the decisions about how to act on their greater awareness and understanding
<b>Nature of Relationship</b>	Similar to master-apprentice  Respectful but not equal	A meeting of two minds, thinking and strategizing together toward a goal	Tutor is in the driver's seat with coach positioned as a support whose own expertise is sidelined
<b>Coach Moves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explain the pedagogy or skill (outline steps; share rationale to build judgment)</li> <li>● Model (live with adults acting as students; with children, live or on video; small moments to full lesson presentations)</li> <li>● Analyze examples (video; role-play models; analyze examples from self and from others)                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Notice &amp; name evidence of skill in practice &amp; impact on children</li> <li>○ Pause to Think Aloud</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Structure practice (role-play)</li> <li>● Offer affirming and corrective feedback (be specific; attach feedback to specific time-stamps on video; share rationale)</li> <li>● Co-planning, co-preparing, co-conferring with children, and/ co-teaching</li> <li>● In-the-moment coaching (whispered suggestions, tutor time-out for conferring, passed notes, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask questions and engage in dialogue to investigate distance between tutor's hopes/goals and current reality for children</li> <li>● Identify goals and strategies to have positive impact on student achievement and well-being</li> <li>● Coach shares or obtains expertise and resources in the service of inquiry, goal-setting, and pursuit of goals                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Some moves from directive coaching (at left) can be leveraged as part of a strategy toward student-centered goals</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Look at data &amp; evidence of progress to goals                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Analyze evidence of practice (video of tutoring &amp; learning; artifacts of student work)</li> <li>○ Focus on and gather evidence from children</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen</li> <li>● Paraphrase</li> <li>● Ask powerful questions</li> <li>● Survey progress over time and unearth global lessons learned (e.g., what do I understand about myself, what insights have I gained, how might I apply what I learned in future situations)</li> </ul>
<b>For the coaching approach to be effective, what should both parties believe to be true?</b>	Tutors want to - but do not know how to - skillfully enact the practices they should be using, so directive coaching will help equip them with missing skills.	Tutors and coaches both bring important knowledge to the relationship and leverage it in shared work toward a student-focused goal, which is what will drive tutor improvement.	Tutors bring the knowledge they need and need support in unpacking it, identifying and overcoming hurdles in applying it, etc.

From the broader K-12 educational context, one tutoring provider interviewed mentioned adapting **coaching tools** from [Bright Morning](#). Tutoring providers committed to culturally responsive and sustaining education will find resources from this organization particularly helpful:

- The work of Elena Aguilar, expressed in her book *The Art of Coaching: Effective Strategies for School Transformation*, which is an approach that explores an educator’s behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being, and that uses a systems thinking perspective to solve for common instructional challenges. For more context and open-source resources:
  - [Open-source coaching resources from Bright Morning, Aguilar’s organization](#), including worksheets and tools from Aguilar’s books for planning, reflection, observation & debrief, conversations, and coach development.

## Organizational Tools

We recommend you find or build an organizational tool to keep track of the feedback and coaching tutors have received and the progress they make over time. There are many products on the market designed to organize feedback and coaching for K-12 teachers, including some that offer sophisticated features like time-stamped feedback on uploaded video clips, the ability to link feedback to customized performance rubrics or standards, and real-time virtual professional development within the platform. While the Accelerator does not make recommendations for specific products, we do encourage you to find a tool that meets your specific needs and, at a minimum, allows you to keep track of the goals tutors are working towards, the feedback and coaching they have received, and the progress they are making.

## A Community of Support and Social Learning

Beyond practice-based professional learning and feedback and individualized coaching, we recommend that programs intentionally build a sense of community amongst their tutors, through social media platforms and in-person events. Programs we interviewed work to bring tutors together in-person when possible and in virtual spaces. These events serve a range of purposes, including connecting tutors to their communities and the mission of their organizations, further engaging them in volunteer efforts, and networking them with fellow tutors so that tutor-driven social learning can happen.

Use information in this chart for guidance on launching a community of support and social learning across several commonly used platforms.

Platform	Community Building Instructions	Cost	Additional Resources
<a href="#">FaceBook Groups</a>	<a href="#">Instructions</a>	\$0 (Free)	<a href="#">FAQs</a>
<a href="#">LinkedIn Groups</a>	<a href="#">Instructions</a>	\$0 (Free)	<a href="#">LinkedIn Help</a>
<a href="#">Mighty Networks</a>	<a href="#">Video Demo</a>	\$98/month	<a href="#">FAQs</a>
<a href="#">Tribe.</a>	<a href="#">Video Demo</a>	\$49/month (Plus plan)	<a href="#">Resources</a> (scroll to the bottom of the page)
<a href="#">Discourse</a>	<a href="#">Video Demo</a>	\$100/month (Standard Plan)	<a href="#">Discussion Site</a>
<a href="#">Vanilla Forums</a>	<a href="#">Video Demo</a>	Must reach out to <a href="#">Sales Team</a>	<a href="#">FAQs</a>
<a href="#">Slack</a>	<a href="#">Video Demo</a>	\$0 (Free version)	<a href="#">Resources Library</a>

One program described the organic planning groups that sprouted from these social networking spaces. Another noted the tremendous mental health benefits their tutors received because the intentional community built across the tutor community reduced tutors' sense of social isolation.

In K-12 education up until the late 1980s, teaching was most often treated like a private, individual endeavor. Rosenholtz (1989) raised the importance of teacher collaboration to achieve shared goals when she found that schools with communities of supportive, social learning had increased teacher efficacy and commitment, which led to increased student achievement. The positive relationship between teacher collaborative learning and increased teacher focus on student learning has been found consistently across years; in some studies, increased student achievement has been found as well (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995; Vescio, Ross, and Adams, 2008; Reeves, 2010).

Consider learning from the following resources, from the fields of K-12 education and beyond:

- [Developing Early Literacy Professional Learning Communities \(PLCs\)](#), from IES/NCEE's Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast, is a seven page infographic that offers evidence-based guidance on the following questions: (1) What are the advantages of providing PLCs for educators in early childhood settings? (2) What do PLCs look like in early childhood settings? (3) What qualities should a PLC

facilitator possess? and (4) What are some important considerations in developing early learning PLC materials?

- Wenger, E. (2014). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. <https://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/06-Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice.pdf> is a six page written summary of what communities of practice are, how they function, where the concept comes from, and where it's being applied.
- [Teacher Participation in Video Clubs and Impact on Practice](#) is a one-page overview of how video clubs are structured and how they influence educators' ability to notice things of significance in classrooms. [Boost Teacher Learning with Video Clubs](#) is a first-hand account of how one teacher established and used video clubs to learn from fellow grade-level teachers.

A community of support and social learning is particularly important for tutors striving to enact a commitment to culturally responsive and sustaining education. Within a supportive learning environment, tutors can have space to critically examine their beliefs and assumptions about the world while also gathering support in aligning tutoring practices with the histories, languages and experiences of traditionally marginalized voices. Many organizations within and beyond education find caucuses or affinity groups useful learning environments for such work. To support your organization, learn from and adapt the [Caucus and Affinity Group resources](#) for Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color and for White People, sourced by Racial Equity Tools. This resource is a web page that defines and establishes the importance of caucuses and affinity groups and then links to other resources that can help organizations establish them.

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