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Paraprofessionals as High-Impact Tutors: Opportunity and Guidance

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Executive Summary

"Paraprofessionals are already working in our schools and classrooms; they know our kids, our teachers, and our instruction. Leveraging them for tutoring not only enhances effectiveness but also elevates the work they're doing. By investing in their professional development, we've elevated their perception of their own work and their value among colleagues."

— Jennifer Rosenbaum, Deputy Chief, DC Public Schools

High-impact tutoring is one of the most promising approaches for increasing student engagement and learning. Paraprofessionals already in schools can be excellent tutors during the school day if well supported with instructional materials and dedicated time for tutoring. This approach effectively addresses student academic gaps early, particularly in lower elementary classrooms.

COVID-19 disrupted learning and [prompted many districts](#) to implement [high-impact tutoring](#), in which a consistent, well-supported tutor provides tailored one-on-one or small-group instruction embedded in the school day. This [research-backed approach](#) consistently demonstrates significant student learning gains from [4-15 months](#), benefiting students who [need improvement in reading and math](#).

While private tutoring has been accessible to families with greater means, high-impact tutoring [embedded into the school day](#) is equitable and incurs no cost to families. It provides intensive, relationship-based, personalized instruction for the students, helping particularly to engage less-engaged students and improve learning for students struggling with grade-level work.

However, high-impact tutoring can be resource-intensive and requires faithful [implementation](#), which can be challenging. Careful [planning](#) and [intentional design](#) are crucial to addressing these challenges.

This brief identifies the potential benefits of paraprofessionals as tutors in early elementary classrooms through interviews with district leaders and experts in the field, as well as from research on program effectiveness. It provides critical steps and guidance for designing and implementing high-impact tutoring, proactively addressing and mitigating potential challenges.

Please submit any feedback, questions, or suggestions [HERE](#).



The Case for Paraprofessionals Implementing High-Impact Tutoring

Paraprofessionals are the [fastest-growing segment of the U.S. educator workforce](#), increasing by 108.5% from 1990 to 2018. A paraprofessional in a school setting, also known as a paraeducator or teaching assistant, is a trained support staff member who works under the supervision of a certified teacher to assist in delivering instructional and non-instructional services to students. Although [their roles and responsibilities](#) may vary, paraprofessionals predominantly engage in the following:

- Administrative support for teachers
- Classroom management
- Instructional support
- One-on-one non-academic support

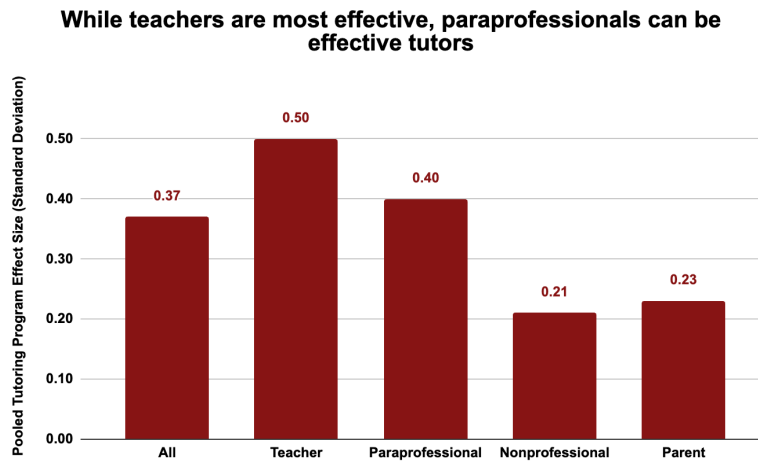
Paraprofessionals often serve [students with learning differences, multi-language learners, and those receiving additional academic support](#). However, studies [on the effectiveness of paraprofessionals in enhancing student learning](#) show small and inconsistent effects. This lack of consistent effects does not imply that paraprofessionals cannot be effective. If well-supported, paraprofessionals can contribute substantially to [student learning](#).

Typical challenges of paraprofessionals providing instructional support include:

- Building paraprofessionals' confidence in their skills and abilities
- Providing sufficient opportunities for coaching and development
- Redefining roles to prioritize instructional and academic support over other duties
- Enhancing content knowledge of paraprofessionals
- Managing paraprofessional scheduling and continuity
- Overcoming potential resistance from staff and administrators who may be unfamiliar with expanded paraprofessional roles

Tutoring programs can provide these necessary support that allow paraprofessionals to excel. With [targeted training](#) and preparation, paraprofessionals can become effective tutors and provide key instructional support for students. Tutoring programs led by paraprofessional tutors are [generally more effective than those with nonprofessional or volunteer tutors](#) (see Figure 1 below). Implementing this strategy requires a shift in school culture, [increased staff collaboration](#), and thoughtful coordination of schedules and resources. However, by reimagining the use of paraprofessionals, schools can create a more efficient and effective support system that benefits all students.

Figure 1



Source: Nickow, A.J., [et.al.](#) (2020). The Impressive effects of tutoring on PreK-12 learning: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. [Edworkingpapers.com](#); Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai20-267>, as cited in Sheehy, M. (2024). High-impact tutoring: Five ways to increase effectiveness with students, National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). <https://www.nctq.org/blog/High-impact-tutoring:-Five-ways-to-increase-effectiveness-with-student>.

Paraprofessionals as tutors have many advantages including:

- **Cohesive Experience:** Paraprofessionals, already part of the school community, have more opportunities to build relationships with students. Transitioning from paraprofessional to tutor is also easier for districts, as they can integrate paras into existing infrastructure more smoothly than external newcomers.
- **Supply of Tutors:** Paraprofessionals are most [prevalent in high-needs schools and lower grades](#), where tutoring consistently has a large impact on student achievement. Additionally, lower elementary grades require less specialized content knowledge, making them a good fit for paraprofessionals with less training in this area.
- **Efficiency:** Utilizing existing roles such as paraprofessionals reduces the logistical challenges of recruiting external tutors, including background checks and relationship-building with students.
- **Community Connection and Linguistic Diversity:** Paraprofessionals often reflect [the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of their communities](#), enhancing their ability to establish meaningful relationships with students and provide native-language support.
- **Professional Growth Pathways:** Tutoring offers paraprofessionals opportunities to grow professionally, especially for those pursuing licensure.



- **Accountability:** Paraprofessionals can likely integrate into district accountability systems, facilitating structured oversight.
- **Sustainability:** Training paraprofessionals to deliver tutoring services builds on existing human capital, promoting long-term capacity within the system.

Furthermore, incorporating high-impact tutoring into the paraprofessional role offers additional benefits for both paraprofessionals and schools:

- **Empowerment:** High-impact tutoring equips paraprofessionals with data-driven decision-making skills, enhancing their agency and potentially [reducing turnover](#).
- **Equitable Resource Allocation:** Assigning paras based on student needs directs resources where they are most needed, promoting equity.
- **Maximizing Impact:** Expanding and strategically deploying paraprofessionals to deliver lessons, guide practice, and provide targeted interventions maximizes their skills and improves student outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable students.
- **Pathways to Certification:** Establishing a para-to-teacher pipeline through high-impact tutoring offers career growth for paraprofessionals and increases diversity among certified educators, reducing reliance on emergency certification programs.
- **Professional Development:** Regular coaching and development associated with high-impact tutoring enhance paraprofessionals' ability to drive academic outcomes and [reduce turnover](#).

To develop this brief, NSSA interviewed district leaders and tutoring providers who implemented paraprofessional-led high-impact tutoring in the following districts: Baltimore City Public Schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, Oakland Public Schools, and South Bend Community School Corporation. Districts provided insights into how to effectively implement high-impact tutoring programs with paraprofessionals. District leaders shared benefits of this approach:

“A huge benefit is that the capacity stays within the system. When we outsource this work to other organizations, that capacity leaves when the contract ends. With paraprofessionals, this has lasting value, as both city schools and employees can continue to build on that expertise.”

— Safonya Ray, Academic Tutoring Coordinator, Baltimore City Public Schools

Guidance for LEAs on Paraprofessionals Implementing High-Impact Tutoring

Districts interested in providing high-impact tutoring using paraeducators can build their own “home-grown” programs or they can partner with providers who will provide the materials and professional development for paraeducators. NSSA has tools to support the full process of partnering or building a “home-grown” tutoring program, including the [High-Impact Tutoring: District Playbook](#). Below is additional guidance specific to employing paraprofessionals as tutors, aligned with the four phases of designing and implementing a High-Impact Tutoring Program.

1. [Lay the Foundation](#): Identifying Paraprofessional Roles Suitable for Tutoring
2. [Plan for Effective Operations](#): Funding Tutoring with Paraprofessionals and Navigating Union Considerations
3. [Design for Impact](#): Recruiting and Selecting Paraprofessionals
4. [Implement with Fidelity](#): Establishing the School Environment and Managing Change

Lay the Foundation

Identifying Paraprofessional Roles Suitable for Tutoring

Use Existing or New Paraprofessional Roles for Tutoring: School systems often utilize existing paraprofessional positions to implement high-impact tutoring activities. Some systems create a new paraprofessional role altogether. While these roles adhere to union agreements and align with the district's pay scale, establishing a new job code and description enhances the district's ability to manage change effectively. [See example job descriptions in the program profiles](#).

Access [section 1](#) of the *District Playbook* for more information on setting up a tutoring program regardless of the tutor type. This section includes assembling a task force, identifying a focus area, aligning with district priorities, and setting goals.

Plan for Effective Operations

Funding Tutoring With Paraprofessionals

Existing Federal Funds: Districts can apply for several [U.S. Department of Education grants](#) to provide high-impact tutoring with paraprofessionals, though additional rules may apply. Paraprofessionals [working in Title I programs](#) or [delivering services to students with disabilities](#) under an Individualized Education Program must meet the requirements. Additionally, all districts that receive Title I funds [must notify families in Title I schools if their child is taught by a](#)



[paraprofessional](#) and provide information about their qualifications.

Federal and State Funding for Para-to-Teacher Pipelines:

- **Title II, Part A:** Districts can use U.S. Department of Education Title II, Part A funds to support [paraprofessionals seeking teacher certification](#). These funds can also [support teacher pipeline activities](#), including career advancement for paraprofessionals through partnerships with higher education institutions, stipends, and other educational opportunities.
- **State Funding:** Several state programs offer grants for paraprofessionals pursuing certification, like the [California Golden State Teaching Grant](#) or the [Office of State Superintendent of Education Apprenticeship in Teaching](#) in DC.
- **Department of Labor Funding:** Districts can access additional federal funds from the Department of Labor by becoming Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). To access these funds, districts must apply through a three-phase process: registering as a RAP and applying for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. WIOA funds cover tuition and wage reimbursements for paraprofessionals and mentors. Apprentices can also access SNAP benefits, child care assistance, and bus passes.
 - The [Educator Registered Apprenticeship Intermediary](#) offers [free technical assistance](#), including RAP education, program design, registration, and launch assistance.
 - The [National Center for the Apprenticeship Degree \(NCAD\)](#) provides [comprehensive support for this process](#).

Philanthropy and State Grants:

- Philanthropic contributions or state grants can cover initial costs, including materials and training stipends.

For a comprehensive list of funding high-impact tutoring, please see [Funding for High-Impact Tutoring](#).

Navigating Union Considerations

Engage [Unions](#) Early: Engage classified and certified unions early in the design process to develop the vision for paraprofessionals as tutors. Highlight the benefits for both students and paraprofessionals. Districts offering a para-apprentice-teacher pathway can emphasize the long-term benefits for the teacher workforce supply and the potential for developing the capacity of already unionized positions to transition into certified teaching roles. For example, if a district pursues becoming a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), it will need to offer salary increases

to apprentices as they gain experience. So, if a district is pursuing this route, the union will need to approve the salary increases for the apprentice.

Review Paraprofessional Contracts with Legal to Understand Union Contract Requirements:

Evaluate existing paraprofessional contracts with legal counsel to shape how districts utilize tutors. For example, contracts may specify that paraprofessionals cannot design lessons and define work hours. By understanding these previously negotiated terms, districts can design programs that comply with union regulations, ensuring paraprofessionals do not take on responsibilities beyond their contracts. This approach prevents any blurring of the lines between paraprofessional and teacher roles.

Access [section 2](#) of the District Playbook for more information on planning for effective operations of a tutoring program regardless of the tutor type. This section includes planning for high-impact tutoring, central staffing needs, designing data and continuous improvement systems, developing a budget, identifying funding sources, and building stakeholder investment and enthusiasm.

Design for Impact

Recruiting Paraprofessionals

Building Understanding of the New Opportunity: Districts can benefit by informing paraprofessionals about this new initiative through information sessions or targeted outreach.

Encourage Existing Paraprofessionals: Actively recruit and encourage current paraprofessionals who are a good fit for the new roles, increasing the diversity of the applicant pool.

Focus on Impact: Share research on high-impact tutoring, its long-term value for students, and its impact on a paraprofessional's professional and personal growth. Districts typically highlight how the training and coaching paraprofessionals receive can benefit them formally, such as pursuing teacher certification, or in more informal ways, such as applying developed skills and content knowledge to other career paths and personal lives.

Outline Support: Detail the training and coaching that paraprofessionals can expect from the district or provider and the materials they will receive to implement their roles effectively.

Provide Incentives: While incentives vary, districts commonly offer:

- **Recognition:** Recognize paraprofessionals for their contributions to the district and community through certificates of recognition, events, and regular moments of appreciation.



- **Financial Resources:** Inform paraprofessionals about additional financial incentives if they pursue this opportunity. These resources may include stipends for further training and responsibilities or funding to cover tuition and living expenses if they pursue a para-to-tutor-to-teacher pathway program.
- **Community:** Develop a supportive culture to retain paraprofessionals and serve as an incentive. Districts may organize events like holiday parties and celebrations to foster community among paraprofessionals. Districts may also encourage peer learning through professional development, group office hours, and online platforms like Facebook groups and message boards.

For more information on how to recruit and select tutors, see [Grow Your Own Program: Recruiting and Selecting Tutors](#).

Selecting Paraprofessionals

Consider Content Knowledge: [Paraprofessionals in Title I programs must meet specific qualification standards](#). Generally, all paraprofessionals working in Title I-supported programs must have at least a high school diploma or a recognized equivalent. Additionally, those hired after January 8, 2002, must have completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education, obtained an associate's or higher degree, or passed a rigorous state or local academic assessment (e.g., ParaPro). The content knowledge requirements for the paraprofessional role result in higher effectiveness at the lower elementary level, where less specialized content knowledge is needed. When placing paraprofessionals in tutoring roles beyond lower elementary, districts implement specific content knowledge assessments before assigning paraprofessionals to a specific grade level/content area. Paraprofessionals starting in new roles may feel more comfortable if a scripted educator-developed curriculum is provided.

Paraprofessionals Apply or Opt-In: Districts implementing effective programs emphasize allowing paraprofessionals to opt in to this role. Districts can create a new position and invite existing paraprofessionals to apply or allow paraprofessionals to opt into these responsibilities.

Effective Practices For Training Paraprofessionals

Align Training with Effective Practices: Districts can use [training development principles](#) and [topic guidelines](#) to create their training programs or consider external training providers. When specifically training paraprofessionals as tutors, district leaders emphasize the following:

- **Training Development Principles**

- **Conceptual Development:** Focus on specific instructional practices rather than theory while providing a conceptual understanding and rationale for each practice.
- **Skill-focused, Asset-Based, and Actionable Training:** Provide explicit, actionable coaching; observe and give feedback on day-to-day expectations; and model high-quality implementation. Training is most effective when it is actionable, timed close to when the paraprofessional will use the practice with students, and includes scaffolded feedback.

- **Training Content Guidance:**

- **Addressing Trauma and Anxiety:** Focus on creating a safe, trusted environment where both students and paras can overcome anxieties, such as math anxiety or past traumas related to learning, fostering a supportive atmosphere for mistakes and growth.
- **Curriculum Overview:** Ensure understanding of the curriculum and methodology.
- **Developmental Behaviors and Classroom Management:** Teach typical student behaviors and effective classroom management practices.
- **Dissect and Practice Sessions:** Walk through materials, practice, and receive feedback.
- **Technology:** Training on necessary technology, data tracking, and attendance tracking.
- **Use Data for Development:** Ground feedback in student assessment growth, linking data to effective practices—disaggregate data to meet students' needs.

Additionally, providing accessible resources (e.g. videos) ensures consistent, ongoing support and materials beyond initial professional development sessions.

Access [section 3](#) of the District Playbook for more information on designing a tutoring program for impact regardless of the tutor type. This section includes guidance on partnering with a provider, selecting a provider, issuing a request for proposal, and contracting with a provider. It also provides guidance on developing an in-house tutoring program, covering the design of the tutoring model, recruiting and selecting tutors, and training and supporting tutors.

Implement with Fidelity

Establishing the School Environment and Managing Change

Pilot and Communicate Changes: Districts can effectively [pilot](#) the revised paraprofessional role in select schools with leaders who opt-in. Additionally, early communication with teachers sets



expectations from the start of the year, avoiding mid-year changes. Regular input and feedback from school leaders and teachers ensure a smooth process.

Provide Guidance and Training: Clear guidance on implementation expectations is crucial. Successful districts provide explicit instructions to schools, teachers, and paraprofessionals, ensuring everyone understands the paraprofessional’s responsibilities and effective tutoring practices. This clarity protects paraprofessionals' time for instructional support. Training includes:

- Paraprofessional's role and expectations for tutoring (e.g., structure, number of students, resources)
- Scenarios affecting implementation fidelity (e.g., paraprofessional or teacher absence, turnover) and proactive measures
- Rationale and research behind the tutoring design and funding and research requirements
- School leader and teacher roles, including scheduling and resources needed
- Training, coaching, and support for paraprofessionals

Monitor Implementation Fidelity: [Collect data](#) on implementation fidelity, including attendance and tutor observation data. System leaders review this data to provide targeted support, ensuring paraprofessionals focus on instructional support without excessive administrative tasks. For more [Examples of Data Collection Tools](#) see our [Toolkit for Tutoring Programs](#).

Strategic Scheduling: Coordinate the master schedule for more paraprofessional support in focus grade levels. This approach allows integration of small-group interventions and personalized learning opportunities. The University of Oregon (profiled in the appendix) often works with district partners to rethink how they schedule paraprofessionals, reassigning them to students instead of teachers. This may result in paraprofessionals being concentrated in specific grade levels, with more than one paraprofessional in a classroom based on student needs.

Access [section 4](#) of the District Playbook for more information on implementing a tutoring program regardless of the tutor type. This section includes guidance on identifying schools, selecting students, scheduling sessions, boosting enrollment and attendance, and building in continuous improvement.

A Call to Action

Implementing high-impact tutoring with paraprofessionals can significantly enhance student achievement. Paraprofessionals, especially prevalent in high-needs schools and lower grades, are well-suited for early-grade tutoring due to their existing school roles, knowledge of their students and their schools, and reflection of community diversity. In many schools they are underutilized. School districts can maximize tutoring impact by strategically deploying paraprofessionals, providing robust training, and ensuring ongoing support. This approach can promote equity, improve instructional quality, and increase individualized student support. Effective implementation requires careful planning, intentional design, and stakeholder collaboration. Investing in paraprofessionals and integrating them into high-impact tutoring frameworks can create a more equitable, efficient, and effective educational system that supports every student's success.



Appendix

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Paraprofessional-led Tutoring Profiles

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (BCPS): DISTRICT DEVELOPED PARA-LED TUTORING

Grades: K-2

Content: Literacy

Tutoring Model: Tier II intervention with up to four students for 30 minutes, five days a week.

Paraprofessional Staffing Model: BCPS created a [new paraeducator role, Early Literacy Tutor](#), aligned with union agreements and pay scales. Each school has three paraprofessional tutors, one assigned to each grade from K-2. Existing paraprofessionals are encouraged to apply for these positions.

Curriculum: Paras implement [Foundations](#) aligned with the district's Tier I foundational literacy curriculum.

Training and Support:

- **Initial Training:** Seven hours over three days, covering Foundations Curriculum, role expectations, classroom management, technology, and data tracking. Wilson Language Training provides curriculum training. District staff lead all other training.
- **On-Going Support:** Monthly coaching from two central program managers and monthly 90-120 min full-cohort training sessions based on coaching trends.

Funding: A state grant under Maryland's Blueprint Funding covers the start-up costs. The district plans to integrate all costs into the operating budget using various title funds. Additionally, the district is in the process of pursuing an ESSA rating to open up further funding opportunities.

Pipeline: Paraprofessionals can opt into the district's existing certification program.

Program Insights:

- **Codify and Implement Progress Monitoring:** The district established guidelines in a manual, a centralized data system for tracking, and regular district meetings to ensure consistent implementation and accountability.
- **Create a New Job Code:** While aligning with the union agreement and pay scale, BCPS developed a new job code and rewrote responsibilities to set clear expectations and manage change rather than reshaping an existing role.
- **Develop Community Among Paras:** The district holds regular events to recognize paras' contributions and support retention. Schools integrate paras into the community and provide training for relationship-building, boosting retention, and enhancing commitment and effectiveness.
- **Start Small and Scale Thoughtfully:** The district piloted the program in one network, simplifying expectations and management. Successful implementation led to scaling the



program to additional networks, demonstrating the model's effectiveness and building greater investment, leading to broader acceptance and success.

Impact: Data from SY22-23 shows that students in grades K-2 who received tutoring demonstrated higher growth rates on the DIBELS 8 assessment than non-tutored students.

Highlighted Resources:

- [Implementation Manual](#)
- [Para Educator - Early Literacy Tutor Job Description](#)
- [Walkthrough Rubric](#)
- [VIDEO: Paraprofessional-led Transitional Supplemental Instruction in BCPS](#)

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (BCPS): TUTORING WITH THE LIGHTNING SQUAD

Grades: 1-3

Content: Literacy

Tutoring Model: Paraprofessional tutors work with groups of up to six students for 30 minutes, five days a week, using the Success for All (SFA) Tutoring program (Lightning Squad for grades 1-3). Students collaborate on online story-based activities in pairs, alternating roles as tutee and coach. This cooperative structure helps them master phonics, blending, fluency, spelling, comprehension, and vocabulary. Tutors monitor progress, provide real-time feedback, and conduct formative assessments after each lesson before advancing students.

Paraprofessional Staffing Model: Schools hire paraprofessionals, typically existing paraprofessionals.

Curriculum: SFA's Tutoring with the Lightning Squad.

Training and Support:

- **Initial Training:** Success for All provides one day (6 hours) of in-person training covering methodology, lesson structure, and practical implementation.
- **Ongoing Support:** Success for All coaches provide regular coaching throughout the school year, including session observations, data reviews, and feedback. A designated school staff member also conducts coaching observations.

Funding: Schools cover costs through existing budgets, with a one-time fee of \$16,400 per school that includes software licensing, initial training, support days, check-in calls, and data tools, covering unlimited paraprofessionals and students. In subsequent years, schools pay a nominal license and support fee to continue the program.

Program Insights:

- **Engage Students:** Cooperative peer participation keeps students engaged as they work in pairs to progress through activities. This collaborative approach enhances learning, builds social skills, and fosters a sense of teamwork among students.
- **Implement Comprehensive Tracking:** Extensive reports track and display student progress for paraprofessional tutors and school administrators. These detailed analytics provide insights into individual and group performance, allowing tutors to implement targeted interventions and continuously improve the tutoring program. This data-driven approach ensures that each student receives the support they need to succeed.
- **Provide at-home Reinforcement:** At-home activities reinforce daytime learning and involve parents. These activities bridge the gap between school and home, encouraging parental involvement and creating a more holistic learning environment for students.
- **Utilize User-Friendly Technology:** The online program is fun and easy to use, with detailed guides and support for paraprofessional tutors. Its intuitive design allows tutors and students to navigate the platform effortlessly, maximizing the time spent on actual learning.

Impact: In 2022-2023, 48 paraprofessional tutors in 38 Baltimore City schools tutored over 1,400 students. On average, students doubled their rate of growth in reading while participating in tutoring.

Highlighted Resources:

- [Video: Tutoring with the Lightning Squad and Baltimore City Public Schools](#)
- [Success for All Tutoring Website](#) (*Success for All also offers a reading intervention program to schools for grades 4-8; more information can be found on the website*)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS: UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, CENTER ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Grades: Kindergarten

Content: Early numeracy

Tutoring Model: Paraprofessionals deliver structured 20-minute lessons three times a week during the supplemental Tier II math block in small groups of up to five students, supplementing core math instruction. Depending on student needs, tutors deliver the program in Spanish and English.

Staffing Model: In kindergarten classrooms, DCPS adjusts the duties and schedules of existing paraprofessionals so that they can implement the [Whole Number Foundations Level K](#) tutoring program.

Curriculum: The Whole Number Foundations Level K Intervention focuses systematically on whole numbers, following a consistent sequence of activities and guided math practice. It includes



educator-developed scripted lessons with extensions, remediations, and probing questions and promotes conceptual understanding, vocabulary, discourse, and procedural fluency based on the concrete-representational-abstract (CRA) theory.

Training and Support:

- **Initial Training:** A 4-6 hour in-person session covers the Whole Number Foundations Level K curriculum, lesson structure, delivery techniques, opening routines, increasing student responses, managing small-group behavior, and interpreting results, with model lessons provided by experienced trainers.
- **Ongoing Support:** Regular 60-120-minute sessions preview content and practice implementation. Schools assign a point of contact trained by curriculum experts to oversee implementation. Each paraprofessional receives three formal and one informal observation focused on fidelity, preparation, engagement, and instructional delivery. Additional support includes optional coaching and office hours with a curriculum expert. The Building Point of Contact provides feedback on various aspects at various stages.

Funding: A private grant through Accelerate covers start-up and research costs, with the program expected to be cost-neutral in subsequent years.

Pipeline: Paras can opt into the district's existing para-to-teacher pathway program.

Program Insights:

- **Encourage Voluntary School Participation and Strategic Scheduling:** Piloting the program with willing schools and staff will lead to higher buy-in and enthusiasm. Consider adjusting paraprofessional schedules to ensure they support during the highest-leverage blocks of class time.
- **Insist on Consistent Intervention Dosage:** Educate school staff on maintaining regular intervention dosage to ensure fidelity to the curriculum, including completing prescribed activities and following educator-developed scripting.
- **Leverage Small Group Time:** Embedding the tutoring program into existing small group or intervention blocks ensures consistency and effectiveness, improving academic performance.
- **Structure Curriculum:** Whole Number Foundations Level K provides a scripted, structured curriculum with explicit instructions and predictable routines, empowering paras to deliver high-quality instruction and build student confidence. Training emphasizes effective routine implementation.

Impact: While studies on the impact of the Whole Number Foundations Level K and DCPS partnership are underway, research in other districts suggests that the Whole Number Foundations Level K (ROOTS) program significantly improves math proficiency, especially for students with lower initial skills and multilingual learners. Feedback indicates that paraprofessionals appreciate the investment in their learning and the respect they receive as partners.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ONCE TUTORING

Grade: K,1

Content: Reading

Tutoring Model: Typically a Tier I support, DCPS implemented Once Tutoring as a Tier II/III intervention with daily 15-minute one-on-one technology-assisted sessions. The program is designed for the paraprofessional to tutor five days per week for at least 2.5 hours daily. Paras can tutor up to ten students one-on-one a day.

Staffing Model: Already existing paraprofessionals deliver daily educator-developed scripted, one-on-one reading instruction using a laptop with instructional materials.

Curriculum: The curriculum follows a scripted approach based on the science of reading. All students complete all lessons regardless of pre-existing knowledge; however, students with pre-existing knowledge progress faster through the curriculum.

Training and Support:

- **Initial Training:** Two three-hour sessions for all instructors and school points of contact cover program context, methodology, technical requirements, lesson execution, and data tools.
- **Ongoing Support:** Twenty hours of Science of Reading coaching, including feedback on recorded lessons. 30-minute weekly coaching sessions via video conference and regular reviews by national coaches.

Funding: Initially funded by ESSER funds, schools now use their local budgets to opt into the Once Tutoring program.

Program Insights:

- **Embed Tutoring in Paras' Roles:** In the Once program, schools allocate 2.5 hours daily for paraprofessionals to conduct tutoring sessions, allowing them to spend the rest of the day on other responsibilities. When schools maintain consistent and protected tutoring time, it enhances the program's effectiveness and reliability. While paraprofessionals may be unavailable to assist with other classroom responsibilities during their tutoring sessions, the targeted support they provide to struggling students helps those students improve their reading skills quickly. This improvement makes differentiation more manageable for teachers in the long term, easing their workload.
- **Implement Intensive Coaching and Support:** Once Tutoring implements a robust coaching model, tutors receive an average of 20 hours of coaching annually from once-hired coaches. This continuous, intensive coaching helps paraprofessionals refine their teaching practices, address challenges promptly, and maintain high instructional quality.
- **Plan for Effective Change Management:** Engage school leaders and teachers early to integrate tutoring into the school's daily operations. Clear communication and



collaborative decision-making support smoother implementation and foster a collaborative environment. Once works with school partners to start the school year with paras implementing tutoring, rather than launching part-way through the year, to support smooth transitions and consistency.

Impact: While studies on the impact of the Once and DCPS partnership are underway, 2023-24 reports show significant kindergarten reading growth across various school districts, with median percentile ranks rising from the 38th to the 67th percentile on the i-Ready assessment.

Highlighted Resources:

- [Once Implementation Guide](#)

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (OUSD): THE OAKLAND REACH & COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

Grades: K-3*

Content: Literacy*

Tutoring Model: Tier II Foundational Skills support with daily 30-minute sessions built into the school day.

Staffing Model: OUSD hires parents, caregivers, and community members as paraprofessional Early Literacy Tutors (Literacy Liberators) in all elementary schools, based on need and school size. As district partners, The Oakland REACH and Collaborative Classroom handle recruitment, pre-service training, and ongoing coaching.

Curriculum: [SIPPS](#) in all schools and [Bookshop Fonética](#) in Spanish dual-language schools.

Training and Support:

- **Initial Training:** The REACH fellowship includes leadership skills, curriculum-specific training, and role preparation. Sessions are held twice a week for six weeks, with an additional four-day training. It provides stipends, meals, childcare, and transportation assistance. The district also offers all tutors a four-day training institute.
- **Ongoing Support:** Coaching and monthly PLCs are provided by the district and [Collaborative Classroom](#) coaches, with the frequency and type of support tailored to individual needs.

Pipeline: Liberators can pursue career advancement with workshops and alternative certification options.

Funding: The Walton Family Foundation and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation covered the start-up costs. The district used ESSER funds for general operations and tutor salaries and has transitioned to Title I funds for sustainability. Funding for coaching and ongoing support comes from philanthropic funders, including the Kenneth Rainin Foundation and Eat.Learn.Play.

Program Insights:

- **Recruit Parents and Caregivers:** Parents and caregivers often share cultural and community backgrounds with students, fostering stronger relationships and trust. Their understanding of the local context and personal investment in the community enhance their effectiveness as tutors.
- **Reduce Entry Barriers:** As part of the fellowship, REACH has implemented strategies to remove barriers for parents and caregivers entering the classified role. Recruitment happens directly at schools and through the district's messaging system, guaranteeing interviews for all applicants. REACH provides application and onboarding support, tech support, and reimburses onboarding expenses for fingerprinting and background checks.
- **Structure Training and Coaching:** Structured training and ongoing coaching are critical for paraprofessional success. Through collaboration with REACH, paras in tutoring roles now receive formalized training, improving implementation fidelity and effectiveness.

Impact: Literacy Liberator Fellows report being better equipped to support students and navigate public school jobs, with training inspiring career advancements within the educational system. A study by CRPE found that parent-led tutoring produced similar gains in reading as instruction from classroom teachers, [with growth rates ranging from 79% to 188% of typical growth](#) on the i-Ready assessment.

Highlighted Resources:

- [CRPE Case Study](#)
- [Video: Day in the Life of a Literacy Liberator](#)
- [Literacy Liberator Job Description](#) & [Overview for Prospective Applicants](#)

**The tutoring model has expanded to include middle/high school literacy and math grades 3-5. The team is in the process of studying the impact of these models.*



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