



NATIONAL STUDENT  
SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

# Learnings from Existing Research On Tutoring Implementation: Implications for District Leaders & Policy Makers

By Sara White, Leiah Groom-Thomas & Susanna Loeb



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## IN THIS BRIEF

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- Findings from a synthesis of 40 research articles
- Implications for district leaders and policy makers on implementation, key relationships, and program design

High-Impact tutoring – one-to-one or small group instruction in which a human tutor supports students in an academic subject area – has emerged as the primary strategy for addressing Covid19-induced learning interruptions. **As tutoring expands nationally, what can we learn from existing research to inform effective planning and implementation?**

Our **recently released paper**, *Undertaking complex but effective instructional supports for students: A systematic review of research on high-impact tutoring planning and implementation*, synthesizes 40 research articles describing the implementation of tutoring programs in the United States since 2000. While previous studies summarized tutoring effectiveness research, we focus on qualitative and mixed-methods research exploring facilitators and barriers to program success. This brief highlights relevant findings for districts and policymakers interested in designing tutoring policies, building district-level implementation strategies, and identifying program features which support positive student experiences and outcomes.

## **District/School Leadership & Systems for Implementation**

District and school leaders play key roles in effective tutoring implementation. By identifying tutoring as a priority for school space, time, and staff capacity, leaders can facilitate the implementation of essential program design features such as the frequency of tutoring sessions or a specific curricular strategy. Dedicated administrative staff also play an important role in facilitating tutoring logistics from hiring tutors to arranging schedules to creating systems for progress monitoring.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS**

- Working with school leaders to identify how tutoring, in general, and specific program design features, in particular, support their school's overarching goals can build school-level support.
- Designating and investing in specific school-level staff to facilitate program administration can smooth complex program implementation.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS**

- Sharing guidance with school and district leaders on integrating tutoring into their district's broader strategies for supporting students and encouraging those leaders to focus on quality implementation can improve implementation and increase tutoring effectiveness.

## Policy & External Relationships to Enable Program Launch

Federal and state policies, as well as relationships with external tutoring providers, can spur the launch of district tutoring programs by expanding access to funding, tutor recruitment, curricular materials, and content knowledge. However, not all policies or external relationships prove fruitful.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

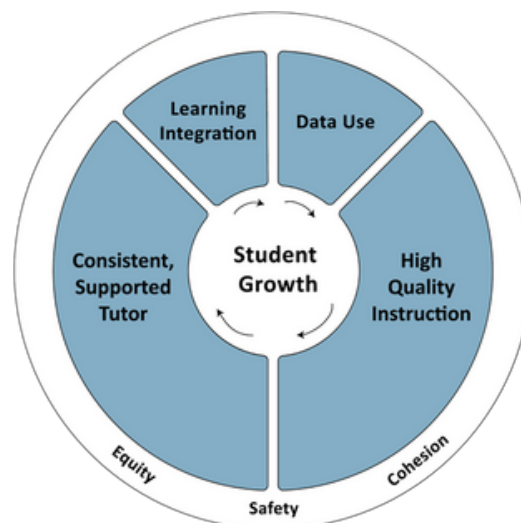
- Strategically identifying institutions of higher ed, community organizations, non-profit, and for-profit tutor providers whose strengths complement existing district resources and goals can build capacities needed for successful implementation.
- Assessing external organizations' quality prior to partnering and investing in on-site staff to monitor program practices during implementation can help to avoid problems while leveraging these outside resources.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

- Identifying districts' needs relative to their capacities and building programs at the state level that can address challenges across districts can help districts reach their tutoring goals. A common need is an increased supply of tutors with the skills to serve high school students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

## High-Impact Tutoring Design Elements

Tutoring programs' schedules, the setting in which they are offered (e.g. in school, in afterschool programs or at home), tutor recruitment strategy, training, and ongoing support, and quality curricula emerge as key considerations for program design.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

- Incorporating tutoring within students' existing school day minimizes commonly cited barriers to participation including transportation and conflicts with after-school commitments and helps to ensure that tutoring is equitably accessible.
- Building strong coordination among school leaders, tutoring providers, teachers, and tutors helps to integrate tutoring into schools and supports more aligned instruction.
- Providing ongoing tutor training and feedback builds tutors' confidence and instructional skills; a lack of support is a common reason cited for tutor turnover.

### High-Impact Tutoring Experience

When policymakers, district, and school leaders implement well-designed tutoring programs that include training and supports for tutors, students are able to build relationships with their tutors over time. These relationships promote strong instruction that is responsive to each student's existing capabilities and focuses on long-term learning goals. Through trusting relationships, tutors learn about students and their life contexts, applying this knowledge to lesson planning and instruction. Their ongoing communication with students may also lead tutors to identify barriers to tutoring attendance which can inform the ongoing improvement of program design.



Leveraging these lessons from 40 research studies of tutoring implementation can support high-impact tutoring efforts to improve students' academic knowledge directly through instruction as well as indirectly through increased confidence in larger-group settings. Moreover, the tutors may develop an increased interest in and skills for becoming a classroom teacher.

# Summary of Influential Elements for Tutoring Implementation

## Policy & External Relationships to Enable Program Launch

- Adequate supply of tutoring partners & technical assistance
- Awareness of tutoring program
- Funding

## District/School Leadership & Systems for Program Implementation

- Leadership see tutoring as aligned with goals/mission
- Leadership knowledgeable about effective tutoring program elements
- Administrative capacity

## High-Impact Tutoring Design Elements

- Setting and schedule
- Supply of tutors/recruitment strategy
- Tutor training & ongoing support
- Quality curricula

## High-Impact Tutoring Experience

- Students access enough tutoring for meaningful impact
- Instruction focused on students' strengths, needs and long-term academic goals
- Strong student-tutor relationship

## Student Outcomes

- Academic learning
- Confidence
- Classroom engagement

## Tutor Outcomes

- Interest in teaching
- Skill in teaching

**Tutoring Program Sustainability & Continuous Improvement**