# NATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

*equalizing access to quality tutoring*

## High-Impact Tutoring:
## Equitable and Effective Student Learning Acceleration



## Strong evidence of effectiveness

Rigorous research provides evidence that tutoring, with specific characteristics, produces large learning gains for a wide range of students, including those who have fallen behind academically. A recent meta-analysis reviewed studies of tutoring interventions that have been evaluated by randomized controlled trials in the past few decades and found that, on average, tutoring increased achievement by an additional three to 15 months of learning across grade levels. Tutoring also offers significant spillover effects including greater school engagement, higher grades in other courses, and benefits to the tutor including exposure to teaching as a career.

## Costly, but most cost-effective intervention

While effective tutoring programs can be expensive, their effects make them cost effective relative to many other educational interventions. A 2017 study examined interventions that aimed to improve achievement for elementary and middle school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Of all the interventions examined, including summer programs, feedback and progress monitoring, cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction, and mentoring of students, tutoring was the most effective. High-impact tutoring can likely be even more cost effective than it is now. Studies currently in the field aim at understanding how to reduce cost while maintaining or even increasing quality.

## The seven elements of high-impact tutoring

Based on a review of existing research and best practices, seven elements of high-impact tutoring are regularly present in effective, high-impact programs.
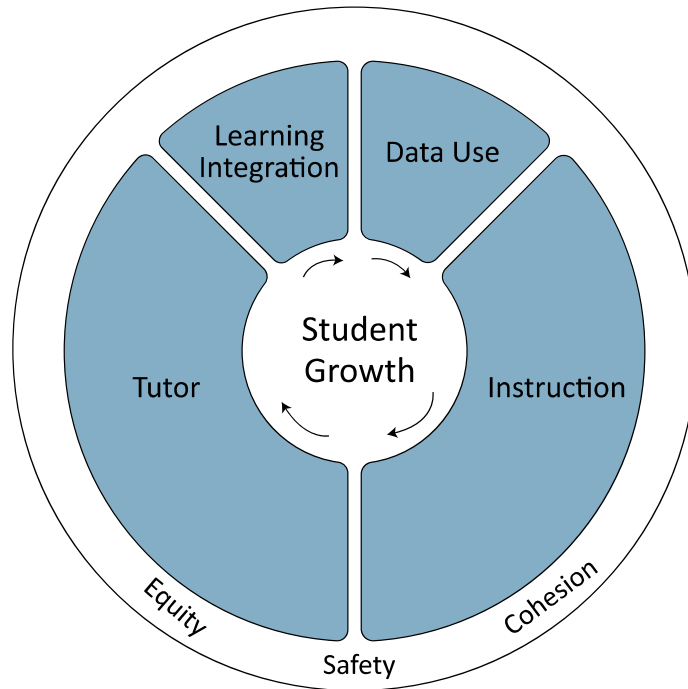


### Foundational Elements

**1** **Equity**

- ■ Accessible to students in need.
- ■ Tutors are trained to lead sessions with equity at the center.
- ■ Tutors reflect the communities and lived experience of the students they tutor.

**2** **Safety**

- ■ Policies, training, and systems are in place to ensure the safety of students.

**3** **Cohesion**

- ■ Elements of the program are aligned and designed to work effectively together.
- ■ Tutoring organization has effective leadership, internal operations and culture.

### Model Elements

**4** **Tutor: consistent, well-supported**

- ■ Tutors are skilled at relationship-building, consistent, knowledgeable about content and are culturally competent.

- <u>Effective tutors can be from a range of backgrounds</u>
  - While certified teachers make highly effective tutors, paraprofessionals and others have proven to be effective with the right training, coaching and materials.
  - Historically, volunteers and university students have not proven to be as effective, however, programs that provide an incentive such as work-study programs or corporate volunteer programs are promising.
- Tutors <u>reflect the students</u> they tutor.
- Tutors have <u>initial training</u>, <u>ongoing coaching</u> and <u>clear</u> lines of <u>accountability</u>.

**5**   **Instruction: significant time, using high-quality materials, in small groups**

- Instruction is <u>supplemental</u> and <u>focused on acceleration</u>, not remediation
- Sessions are a <u>minimum of three times per week</u>.
- <u>Duration of sessions depends</u> on the program's content area and student age (often 30 minutes in younger grades and up to a full class period in older grades).
- Duration is a minimum of 10 weeks, <u>preferably the full school year</u>.
- <u>Group size is no more than three</u>.
- Materials are <u>aligned with both state standards and research</u> on teaching and learning, are engaging and easy for tutors to use. Preference is for high quality materials over matching classroom instructional materials.
- Preference is for sessions to be in-person, however research is showing that virtual can be effective and is a particularly good strategy for content areas in which it is more difficult to source tutors such as higher-level math.

**6**   **Learning Integration: embedded in school**

- <u>Tutoring is embedded in the school program</u> to create equitable access and consistency for students and coordination with school efforts.
- <u>Family is engaged</u> and understands and supports their student's participation.

**7**   **Data Use: regularly used to inform instruction and program improvement**

- Student data is <u>used consistently</u> to understand students strengths and needs, and build sessions to focus on student needs.
- Program data is used to assess effectiveness at improving student learning and make adjustments based on these data.

**Summary of Model Elements of High-Impact Tutoring**

|  | **Absolutes** | **Variables** |
|---|---|---|
| **Tutors** | <ul><li>Ability to engage students</li><li>Reliable and consistent</li><li>Initial training that includes issues of equity and safety</li><li>Ongoing oversight and coaching</li></ul> | <ul><li>Tutor background (teachers, paraprofessionals, college students…)</li><li>Pedagogical/Content knowledge</li><li>Who hires and oversees tutors</li></ul> |
| **Instruction** | <ul><li>High-frequency (3+ times per week, 30+ minutes)</li><li>High-quality materials</li><li>3 or fewer students per tutor</li></ul> | <ul><li>Preference for in-person, but virtual can be effective</li></ul> |
| **Integration** | <ul><li>In students' academic schedule</li><li>Aligned with state standards</li><li>Engaged with teachers and parents</li></ul> | <ul><li>Extent to which the material matches classroom work (e.g. depends on quality)</li><li>Role of the teacher</li></ul> |
| **Data** | <ul><li>Formative and ongoing assessments to tailor instruction</li><li>Regular assessment of tutors and program progress</li></ul> | <ul><li>Who collects / provides the data</li></ul> |

## Not all tutoring is equitable or effective

While high-impact tutoring demonstrates unusually strong evidence of effectiveness, it has only been available to a small number of students. Attempts to scale tutoring more broadly have focused on different form of tutoring, with much less evidence of effectiveness. Under No Child Left Behind, low-income parents could enroll their child in a state approved tutoring program after school if their school did not make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years. Results were not equitable or effective. Participation at its highest was only 23% of eligible students. Results for those 23% of students were mixed with very little academic benefit on average.

## Now is the time to create equitable access to high-impact tutoring

Research tells us that high-impact tutoring has not scaled primarily because it is difficult for districts to change the academic schedule to accommodate tutoring, to raise needed additional funding and to either create a new, in-house tutoring program or identify the right tutoring organization with which to partner.

While COVID-19 has clearly widened inequality in educational outcomes and increased the need of high-impact tutoring, it has also created opportunities to scale high-impact tutoring. The pandemic disrupted school schedules which allows new options that could include embedding tutoring in students daily schedules. The new influx of educational funding from the federal government provides the needed resources. And we have needed

information on existing tutoring programs and on the steps needed to create new programs. Now is the time to leverage research-based best practices to provide access to high-impact tutoring for students in need.

## What can be done to support high-impact tutoring?

**States**

Provide guidance that identifies high-impact tutoring as an effective use of funding and that defines clear policy guardrails to support districts in developing high-impact tutoring programs.

Create infrastructure to help districts design and launch high-impact tutoring which could include, among other options, a vetted list of tutoring providers, a streamlined system for tutors to receive background checks, and resources for program development and training.

**Districts**

Prioritize high-impact tutoring in district plans to accelerate learning in response to COVID-19, simplify design decisions and ensure effectiveness by incorporating best practices into your planning, and share materials on the effectiveness of high-impact tutoring with school boards, teachers, parents and others to garner their support.

**Parents**

Share materials about the effectiveness of high-impact tutoring with your district's leadership and advocate for high-impact tutoring programs for your children.

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**The National Student Support Accelerator**'s vision is that every student in need has access to an effective tutor who champions and ensures their learning and success.

For additional resources, tools, and technical assistance please visit www.studentsupportaccelerator.org or contact Susanna Loeb at susanna.loeb@studentsupportaccelerator.org.