

NATIONAL STUDENT
SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

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High-Impact Tutoring: Family & Caregiver Toolkit for School Districts

August 2024

studentsupportaccelerator.org



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Overview

If you're reading this, you likely have already recognized the meaningful, measurable benefits that high-impact tutoring can have for our students. The National Student Support Accelerator (NSSA) recognizes the key role families and caregivers play in this work. By building meaningful relationships, developing programming with families, and sustaining ongoing partnership structures, we can collectively continue to scale and sustain high-impact tutoring.

This toolkit—which complements the [High-Impact Tutoring: Family and Caregiver Toolkit](#) developed for families—is designed to support your efforts building meaningful relationships and developing programming with families in order to collectively scale and sustain high-impact tutoring. Specifically, this toolkit is designed to support district leaders to:

- [Empower families to partner and advocate for high-impact tutoring](#)
- [Share high-impact tutoring opportunities for families](#)
- [Align high-impact tutoring to students' academic progress](#)

“How do you affirm the expertise of your child’s first teacher, their parents?”
- Dr. Shadae Harris, former Chief Engagement Officer, Richmond Public Schools

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit provides guidance for district leaders in engaging families in their high-impact tutoring programs. It may also be useful to other education leaders including those in higher education institutions and community-based organizations who are providing high-impact tutoring. If you are looking for resources for families and caregivers to understand, partner, and advocate for high-impact tutoring in their local communities, visit our [companion guide for families](#).

How did we develop this toolkit?

We developed this toolkit through conversations with families and district leaders across the U.S., as well as through a close reading of the research on high-impact tutoring and on family, caregiver, and district partnerships. The toolkit complements our [High-Impact Tutoring Family and Caregiver Toolkit](#) that we developed in partnership with Innovate Public Schools. We structured both of these resources to honor the insights and experiences of families, caregivers, parent leaders, family advocacy organizers, and district leaders. Visit the [Acknowledgements](#) section of the toolkit for the full list of contributors.



Empower families to partner and advocate for high-impact tutoring

Empowering families to advocate for high-impact tutoring begins with early and meaningful collaboration. Engage families from the very start, involving them in planning and program design. However, districts can cultivate authentic partnerships, grounded in trust and a deep understanding of families' experiences at any point in the process. Effective programs maintain continuous engagement with families, actively soliciting their input and providing the necessary support to strengthen their advocacy efforts. Below, we share insights gathered from family focus groups, along with tailored recommendations to address their concerns.

What we heard from families

- Families and caregivers would like to partner with districts early, beginning with the planning and design of your high-impact tutoring program.
- It is never too late to begin authentic partnerships. Even if they were not part of the original design process, families and caregivers are interested in being involved throughout the year.
- Families suggest building their trust by dedicating time to learn more about their experiences.
- Once an advocacy or partnership idea has been co-designed, school districts, schools, and tutoring programs can provide the resources necessary to empower families in these efforts. For example, Innovate Public Schools collaborated with parents to produce [this report](#) describing high-impact tutoring.
- Families sometimes work with local parent leadership and advocacy organizations to advocate for and find opportunities for students to participate in high-impact tutoring.
- When district or school leadership changes, parents/caregivers and parent/caregiver leaders sometimes have trouble maintaining their relationships and continuing advocacy efforts.

Recommendations to empower families

- Ensure families feel welcome, heard, and seen by collecting, valuing, and acting upon their input early in the process. This kind of two-way meaningful partnership builds trust between families and schools. Reflect on your district's current practices for engaging families and identify areas of strength or improvement that can help or hinder your roll out of your high-impact tutoring

initiative. These reflections can inform the input you seek and how you act upon this input to continue to build trust with families whose students are participating in high-impact tutoring.

- Leverage existing structures, such as your district’s office of family engagement or your school-based family ambassadors, to partner with families on your high-impact tutoring initiative. Leaders working in these spaces have expertise and experience in developing strong relationships with families, offering valuable insights to learn from. Existing city government partnerships can also serve as supportive connections for family partnership.
- Develop a plan to engage families in high-impact tutoring throughout the school year considering your goals, activities, and who will lead these efforts from the district side. Refer to existing family engagement plans your district has used in the past for ideas as well as [these communications templates](#) for suggestions of activities and moments during the year to engage.
- When developing a task force or working group to design or revise your high-impact tutoring program, make sure families have a “seat at the table.” In other words, partner with parent leaders and family engagement organizations to identify family representatives for the task force or working group. Provide adequate time for representatives to work with the families they represent throughout the task force or working group meetings. If possible, consider compensating families for their time.
- Ask families for [regular feedback](#) about their child’s experience in high-impact tutoring. Address family needs and seek feedback on your proposed solutions.
- Keep parent and family communities apprised of any leadership or key personnel changes, and offer opportunities for new staff to engage with the parents/caregivers in a timely manner.

Opportunities for Engagement

Consider hosting formal and informal gatherings with families to understand their thoughts and ideas about academic student supports and their willingness to provide support, including how to advocate for and support high-impact tutoring efforts.

- **Programming Input:**
 - Include parents and/or parent leaders on the task force or working group that is designing or revising the tutoring program.



- Establish a family advisory group for your high-impact tutoring program - or incorporate the topic into an existing family advisory group, if one already exists - to maintain regular partnership with parents and/or parent leaders.
- When schools and/or district leaders have budget meetings, invite families to provide input into how high-impact tutoring is being funded. If families need additional context to offer informed input, share information through pre-meetings and communications.
- **Programming Support:**
 - When or if district/school leadership changes, engage fellow parents in establishing connections, including to support high-impact tutoring in your district and/or school.
 - When or if district/school leadership changes, engage fellow parents in establishing connections, including to support high-impact tutoring in your district and/or school.
- **Direct Service Support:**
 - Host 1:1s with families and tutoring program staff (i.e., program managers instead of individual tutors) before or after school to check in and get feedback on the program. Use the time to ask families how they would like to engage and design engagement strategies around what families say is most important to them.
 - Hold community events such as BBQs, pickup basketball games or coffee and bagels to provide an open space to build rapport with families and to hear directly from families about their ideas for high-impact tutoring advocacy efforts.

The Power of Partnership

Consider the multiple partners across your system who can support your family partnership and engagement efforts. This will enable you to improve and enhance your family engagement work without adding new staffing and resource constraints to this important work. Prioritize opportunities for partners across your system to engage in 1:1 conversations with parents in person.

- **Potential Partners**
 - Your district's office of family engagement
 - School-based staff

- Front office staff, family ambassadors, guidance counselors, school deans, social workers, teachers, paraprofessionals, school leaders
- Parent-teacher associations
- Faith-based organizations
- Other community-facing partners
- School board members
- After-school program staff
- Parent leadership organizations
- Other community-based organizations
- Local elected officials; i.e., mayors and city council officials
- Local media outlets

Opportunities for parent partnership can and should extend beyond seeking feedback on programming led by others. Parents have a wealth of knowledge, skills, and resources that can contribute substantially to your high-impact tutoring program. These are some of the examples we've seen in the field:

- **Serve as leaders in the work:** Parents are able to help spread the word about tutoring opportunities. Be sure to start by meeting to understand how parents would be able to support instead of just requesting their support without co-development.
- **Serve as paid tutors:** Several organizations, such as [the Oakland REACH](#), have developed parent partnerships to train and support parents to be tutors for a specific program. This opportunity should come with adequate and equitable compensation.
- **Help find tutor applicants through community connections:** In addition to asking families if they're interested in serving as tutors themselves, parents can also help find additional community members to serve as tutors. Be sure to start by meeting to understand how parents would lead these efforts instead of requesting their support without co-development.

Communications to empower families

We know that district leaders have full schedules and that taking the time to craft communications to families takes time. To support districts in implementing the recommendations and opportunities outlined above, we developed communications templates with sample emails, flyers, meeting agendas, etc. The language in these templates is crafted based on conversations with families, particularly



around the definition of high-impact tutoring, and is written in a way that is open and inviting to families to help build trusting, authentic partnership. Explore [these communications templates](#) that support the goal of empowering families to partner and advocate for high-impact tutoring.

Additional Resources

- Visit the Family and Caregiver Toolkit for language and resources co-created with families for [Partnering and Advocating](#).
- Encourage families to use [these questions](#) throughout their child’s tutoring program.
- Consider these suggestions for [continual communication with families](#) about high-impact tutoring.
- Read about how some [district leaders have developed a team approach](#) - including families - to help their tutoring programs succeed.
- Use [this survey to get feedback from families](#) about their child’s tutoring experience.
- Review the [Dual Capacity Framework](#), one of the most frequently cited family engagement frameworks used by U.S. school districts, to learn more about authentic partnerships and the importance of relationship-building and trust.
- Review Chapter 5: Establishing Partnerships with Families in this [Newcomer Toolkit](#) to learn more about partnering with families of newcomer students.
- Share parent leader training opportunities and empower parents to learn how to organize with other families. We’ve included a few examples for you here:
 - [Community Organizer Training Program \(COTP\) Bootcamp](#)
 - [COFI Center for Action and Learning](#)
 - [United Parent Leaders Action Network \(UPLAN\)](#)

Share high-impact tutoring opportunities with families

Many families want high-quality tutoring for their kids, but they don't always know what's available or what it costs. We have heard from other parents that they want to understand what tutoring options are out there. To do this, we recommend using simple language, sharing information using existing relationships, explaining the costs, highlighting the benefits, and using different ways to spread the word. Here are what strategies we've heard to overcome barriers to communication.

What we heard from families

- High-impact tutoring is valuable, and many families want their kids to be able to participate.
- Families aren't always clear about what high-impact or high-dosage tutoring means. Providing a clear, research-based definition that aligns with the model your district uses is very important to effective communication.
- Families can have difficulty finding high-impact tutoring opportunities that are available free of cost.
- When a school tells a family their child is receiving high-impact tutoring but it doesn't meet the definition of high-impact tutoring, it can be frustrating. In particular, families expressed that homework help and inconsistent tutors were areas of frustration for them and their children.

Recommendations to share opportunities with families

- Use [this accessible language](#), developed in partnership with families, to frame the information you share, and align the language about your program to the [definition of high-impact tutoring](#).
- Leverage existing partnerships within your district and community to build relationships with families as you work to communicate program opportunities. Leveraging partnerships could involve working through your district's Office of Family Engagement and/or school-based family liaisons, for example.
- Be clear about whether or not families will need to pay for tutoring.
- Share the benefits of high-impact tutoring aligned with students' academic needs.



- Encourage teachers to share the opportunities for students to participate in high-impact tutoring (and/or if they're already receiving services) at parent/teacher conferences and include program information at back-to-school nights.
- Share a press release with local media to spread the word.
- Encourage parent leaders to share the information with other parents in their networks.
- Concentrate efforts to share opportunities for high-impact tutoring broadly at the start of the enrollment period so that students can receive the maximum benefits from tutoring.

“If you skip over the step of building authentic and trusting relationships with your families and the community, then all of those wonderful initiatives that you attempt to put into place don’t have a strong foundation on which to sit.” - Karen Mapp



This short video gives a brief explanation of high-impact tutoring. Consider using this to communicate with families! A Spanish-version of the video is available [here](#).

Communications to share opportunities

Explore [these communications templates](#) that support effectively communicating high-impact tutoring opportunities to families. The templates focus on the launch of high-impact tutoring programs and can be customized for additional needs.

Additional Resources

- If you are planning your program or revising your current program, it is important to [assemble a task force](#). Be sure to include parents and/or parent leaders in the process.
- Learn more about [Crafting an Introductory Statement](#) to families.
- Does your program require family permission slips? This [permission slip template](#) can get you started - also in Spanish!

Align high-impact tutoring to students' academic progress

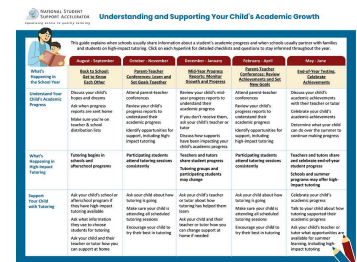
Effective communication of students' academic progress to families is essential for their understanding and support. Translating grades and assessments into clear, comprehensible information allows families to better assist their children academically. Families desire actionable advice to support their child's learning at home and celebrate their achievements. High-impact tutoring is an effective strategy for addressing students' learning needs and can be part of a collaborative effort with parents and caregivers to support students. See below for more on what we heard from families and the associated recommendations to address what we heard.

What we heard from families

- Caregivers often find the way educators talk about students' academic progress to be unclear and confusing, leaving them not fully understanding how their child is doing compared to grade-level expectations.
- When educators dedicate time to translating grades and assessment scores into information that families can clearly understand, families are able to work with their children to support their academic needs.
- Families want to know how to support their students' learning at home. Providing concrete ideas of what to talk with their child about and what to do at home can help them and their children.
- Pairing the understanding of students' academic progress with high-impact tutoring opportunities provides a clear path to partner with families to address student learning needs.
- Families want to celebrate students' accomplishments. When a student has worked hard to achieve a milestone, families want to know!

Recommendations to align to student progress

- Connect high-impact tutoring opportunities to other communications about students' academic progress. For example, share high-impact tutoring program information during parent/teacher conferences or when report cards are shared with families. [This guide](#), developed in partnership with families, provides additional examples of opportunities for connections.



- When students take benchmark assessments that provide information about grade-level performance, [provide opportunities for families to understand](#) what the reports are saying about their students' academic progress and [resources for teachers](#) to engage in these conversations with families.
- When a student is not meeting grade-level expectations in a specific area, clearly communicate this challenge with the family, including how high-impact tutoring can help the student grow academically.
- Provide opportunities for families to meet with their child's tutor or other tutoring program staff.
- Send text message reminders to families and students (if applicable) on days when students are scheduled for tutoring. Sending reminders to families and students [increases attendance rates for opt-in tutoring](#) and is likely to also have an impact on high-impact tutoring.

Communications to align to student progress

Explore [these communications templates](#) that support the goal of aligning high-impact tutoring to students' academic progress.

Additional Resources

- Review the Family and Caregiver Toolkit for language and resources co-created with families for [Partnering and Advocating](#).
- Visit the [Learning Heroes website](#) for concrete resources and research for families and partner organizations. The Learning Heroes website includes many [Family Engagement Resources](#) you can use for free.
- Partner with families to help them understand what students should be learning at **each grade** in order to be prepared for college and career by reading the [Parents' Guides to Student Success](#) and this [Readiness Roadmap](#)!



Engagement Examples

Below are inspiring stories of how districts partnered with families to understand their academic needs, and how parents successfully advocated for high-impact tutoring locally in their own communities.

Interested in learning more about how families have advocated for high-impact tutoring in their communities? Check out these [Advocacy Examples](#) in the Family and Caregiver Toolkit.

Program Profile: Columbus City Schools



Columbus City Schools leverages its Office of Engagement and structured initiatives like Family University and Family Ambassadors to elevate its high-impact tutoring program. This profile showcases

how strategic family partnerships and tailored communication contribute to successful family engagement for their high-impact tutoring program.

Columbus City Schools' (CCS) Office of Engagement supercharged their high-impact tutoring program, building strong partnerships with families and setting students up for success. How did they do it? Through these 3 key structures:

1. Office of Engagement: A Strategic Asset

CCS' Office of Engagement acts as the bridge between families and schools. The Office's existing practices of connecting and building relationships with families set the district up for success in partnering with families on their high-impact tutoring initiative. This office has established strong communication pathways that were pivotal during the program's launch and continue to support its ongoing operations.

2. Family University: A Familiar Structure

CCS utilizes its Family University structure to offer ongoing programming for families across the district and to share information about new initiatives, like high-impact tutoring. This setup provides families with workshops and educational sessions, helping them understand the academic processes and progress of their students. The Family University enabled the district to share information



about their high-impact tutoring program in an existing, well-known structure. Sessions are recorded and added to a library so families that could not attend live still have access to programming.

3. Family Ambassadors: For School-Specific Partnership

Each school within CCS benefits from the presence of a Family Ambassador, a pivotal role in facilitating direct communication and support between the school and the families. These ambassadors are trained to organize school-based meetings, build strong relationships, and develop and share newsletters that keep families informed and engaged. This strategic communication ensures that schools continuously prioritize building relationships with families and discover how each family's assets can strengthen the school community. When CCS launched their high-impact tutoring program, they sought the help of their Family Ambassadors to ensure families understood and could partner with each school to design and continuously revise the high-impact tutoring models in their individual schools. The school principals and Director of Engagement, Seneca Bing, worked directly with Ambassadors and families to ensure a strong balance of consistent quality and flexible implementation.

Broad Street Elementary: Data with a Twist



Broad Street Elementary: Data with a Twist “Data with a Twist” at Broad Street Elementary in Butler, PA, emphasized the role of family involvement in understanding student success through engaging presentations by school staff with a focus on student data. The event, part of the “Parents as Allies” initiative, fostered an inclusive atmosphere where families were empowered with knowledge to actively support their children’s educational journey.

For districts seeking ideas to build families’ understanding of their child’s education progress, Broad Street Elementary in Butler, PA provides an excellent example. Families and educators came together for an event called “[Data with a Twist](#),” that demonstrates how educational innovation and community partnership can support student learning. The event took place as part of the [Parents as Allies](#) project, an initiative across more than 20 Pennsylvania school districts to support schools and families to co-design innovative solutions that promote family engagement.

On the school’s patio, parents gathered for a meal and listened to a reading specialist present early literacy academic performance data. This session equipped parents with the knowledge to actively engage in their children's education. Meanwhile, their children were inside, immersed in hands-on



STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) activities. This setup not only shared valuable insights but also celebrated the collective effort to improve educational outcomes.

“Data with a Twist” stands as a testament to Broad Street’s commitment to creating a culture of inclusivity, where the school is not merely a place for academic learning but a community hub that welcomes and values the input of every family. Events such as this one can lead to powerful connections and opportunities to tie instructional interventions - such as high-impact tutoring - to a meaningful understanding of a student’s academic progress.

Communications Templates

[These templates](#) support communication strategies to build authentic partnership between educators and families with high-impact tutoring. Because every district and program has their own unique branding, color schemes, and images, we recommend you use the language in these documents as a starting point to develop communications materials for your context.



Acknowledgements

NSSA extends our gratitude to all who contributed to the toolkit. We are especially grateful to Brittany Miller, Jennifer Moore, and Theo Shaw. We also appreciate the following individuals for engaging in interviews, and the families and parent leaders affiliated with Innovate Public Schools and Parent Shield for sharing their expertise, assisting us to craft accessible tools for families and parents.

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NATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

equalizing access to quality tutoring

National Student Support Accelerator (NSSA) is a program of the Stanford Accelerator for Learning and Systems Change for Advancing Learning and Equity (SCALE) at Stanford University.

NSSA is devoted to translating promising research about how tutoring can benefit students into action on the ground. Our vision is that every K-12 student in need will have access to an effective tutor that champions and ensures their learning and success. NSSA focuses on three strands of work: catalyzing the field of tutoring by creating communities of practice, building consensus around standards, and coordinating research efforts; accelerating the growth of high-impact tutoring by providing open access tools and technical assistance to schools, districts and states interested in implementing tutoring and to tutoring providers interested in improvement; and engaging and activating stakeholders to build demand and ensure funding.