# National Student Support Accelerator

*equalizing access to quality tutoring*

## High-Impact Tutoring
## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) For Educators

## What is high-impact tutoring?

High-impact tutoring is one-on-one or small group instruction with the following characteristics:
- Three or more sessions per week, each one at least 30-minutes long (later grades can benefit from longer 45- to 60-minute sessions),
- a focus on cultivating tutor-student relationships,
- use of formative assessments to monitor student learning,
- alignment with the school curriculum, and
- formalized tutor training and support.

High-impact tutoring leads to substantial learning gains for students by supplementing (but not replacing) students' classroom experiences. High-impact tutoring responds to individual needs and complements students' existing curriculum.

## What makes a tutoring program "high-impact"?

High-impact tutoring programs are those that either have directly demonstrated significant gains in student learning through state-of-the-art research studies or have characteristics that have proven to accelerate student learning.

Here is a short presentation that further defines the seven dimensions of high-impact tutoring (tutors, instruction, learning integration, data use, equity, safety and cohesion) and makes the evidence-based case for high-impact tutoring.

## What is NOT high-impact tutoring?

High-Impact tutoring does not:
- Rely solely on the student or parent to understand what student's academic needs are nor to initiate the tutor-student connection (such as purely homework help programs)

- Use materials that are disconnected from school curriculum or of poor quality
- Provide irregular interactions with multiple tutors
- Use tutors who are not trained and coached on an ongoing basis

## How do we know high-impact tutoring works?

The research evidence is clear: high-impact tutoring positively affects student learning.

Two recent meta-analyses found that, on average, tutoring interventions increase student learning outcomes by over one-third of a standard-deviation (Dietrichson et al., 2017; Nickow et al., 2020). The average effects of tutoring interventions are considered large for educational interventions (Kraft, 2020) and translate to between three and fifteen additional months of learning for students (Bloom et al., 2008). These analyses (as well as those of Ritter et al., 2009) focus exclusively on student learning outcomes, and do not speak to whether these tutoring interventions impact other, non-academic student outcomes.

In their 2017 meta-analysis, Dietrichson, Bog, Filges, and Jorgensen examined interventions that aimed to improve the educational achievement for low socioeconomic status (SES) students in elementary and middle school. Of all the interventions examined, tutoring was both the most common (36 of the 101 studies employed a tutoring component) and the most effective, with an average effect size of 0.36-standard deviations on standardized academic tests (95% confidence interval [CI] [0.26, 0.45]).

More recently, Nickow, Oreopoulous, and Quan (2020) surveyed 96 K-12 tutoring interventions evaluated in RCTs. They found strikingly similar results to those of Dietrichson and colleagues — the pooled effect size was 0.37-standard deviations on academic learning outcomes (95% CI [0.30, 0.43]). While the majority of these studies had relatively small sample sizes, 15 studies included over 400 participants and the magnitude of the effect attenuated only slightly. The larger-scale tutoring programs had an average effect size of 0.25-standard deviations on learning outcomes, and the effect size does not appear to get smaller as the sample size of large programs increased. These findings provide evidence that implementing tutoring programs at scale can meaningfully improve student outcomes.

## For whom does high-impact tutoring work?

While most research has focused on early literacy and middle and high school math, this range of grade levels indicates that programs for other grades would likely be effective if designed similarly. High-impact tutoring is effective for a range of students, including those who are far behind academically.

## In what content areas does high-impact tutoring work?

While most research has focused on early literacy and middle and high school math, this range of subject areas indicates that programs for other subjects would likely be effective if designed similarly.

## Who are high-impact tutors?

A wide range of people can become high-impact tutors. A high-impact tutor must have the appropriate content knowledge and the ability to engage productively with students. While teachers have proven to be particularly effective tutors, paraprofessionals can also be very effective tutors and may be more feasible to employ as tutors than teachers for both cost and logistical reasons. Tutoring programs staffed by volunteers and university students display positive, but consistently smaller impacts than those staffed by teachers and paraprofessionals.

## How would high-impact tutoring affect my job?

High-impact tutoring supplements and supports classroom teaching. It provides your students with additional personalized and aligned instruction to meet their individual needs. High-impact tutoring can benefit from the time you take to inform tutors about your students' needs, but good systems can minimize this time. High-impact tutoring programs can hire, train and coach the tutors, so that teachers can focus on teaching. High-impact tutoring can help teachers provide the personalized attention that they want for their students and can make their jobs easier.

## When does high-impact tutoring occur?

High-impact tutoring is best scheduled during the school day to ensure all students have access.  However, scheduling can be tricky. Districts often prioritize groups of students for tutoring or rotate students by semester into tutoring to allow for scheduling. Other successful solutions include repurposing a portion or all of an intervention period, replacing one (but not all) electives, repurposing a portion or all of a homeroom period, using time either right before or after school (only if systems are in place to provide transportation), and even extending the school day.

## How will we find tutors when staffing basic school functions are challenging?

A wide range of people can be effective high-impact tutors as long as they have quality training and ongoing coaching. We have seen districts recruit retired teachers, partner with local colleges and universities to provide tutors (often using work-study funding to pay the tutors), partner with a local or a virtual tutoring organization to provide tutors (see database of tutoring organizations), others have trained members of existing community partnerships such as City Year to become high-impact tutors and others have paid existing educators additional funds to add tutoring to their schedule.

## How do I speak to my students about high-impact tutoring?

Let your students know that high-impact tutoring is an opportunity to accelerate their learning because it provides personalized instruction and helps them develop a close relationship with a caring adult. Make sure that it is clear to them that tutoring is not a punishment for poor performance but an opportunity to excel.

## How do I speak to parents of students about high-impact tutoring?

Let your students' parents know that high-impact tutoring is an opportunity for more personalized instruction so that their child can excel in school. Because their child will meet with their tutor multiple times per week, they also will have the opportunity to build a relationship with another adult who can be a source of support and a champion for them.

## How do I convince my district to bring high-impact tutoring to my school?

Here are some steps you can take to bring high-impact tutoring to your school:
- Identify peers in your district who are also interested in high-impact tutoring with whom you can partner, and identify opinion leaders and decision makers that will need to be onboard.
- Review, adapt and share this document that makes the case for high-impact tutoring to start the conversation. If you need more evidence or examples, refer to our Research Agenda and our Tutoring Program Database. For critical design features, refer to Policy Considerations.
- Speak with peers and others in order to clarify how high-impact tutoring can benefit the students in your district and to identify potential barriers to implementing high-impact tutoring and how to overcome those barriers.
- Recruit a school or district leader who will champion the implementation of high-impact tutoring.
- If funding is an issue, refer to Funding Tutoring Programs and Using the American Rescue Plan Act Funding for High-Impact Tutoring for suggested sources.
- For additional suggestions, reach out to the National Student Support Accelerator at (susanna.loeb@studentsupportaccelerator.org)

## How do I convince my legislators that they should fund high-impact tutoring?

Reach out to your state representatives using our Policy Considerations brief and encourage others to do the same. Please feel free to revise the brief to include specific details about your state and to meet your needs.

## Where can I learn more about high-impact tutoring?

The National Student Support Accelerator provides a wealth of information on high-impact tutoring, including:

- Tutoring Database A searchable database of over 200 tutoring programs and technology platforms to help districts and schools identify potential tutoring partners.
- District Playbook A research-based guidebook and accompanying Workbook to help districts assess their needs, design and implement their own program or partner with a provider to launch a High-Impact Tutoring program.
- Tutoring Program Cost Calculator A simple tool that education institutions or tutoring organizations can use to estimate the cost of their tutoring program and to help understand how the costs of their tutoring program will vary based on key design elements such as tutor type, student to tutor ratio and dosage.

- [Toolkit for Tutoring Programs](#) A cohesive set of practical, research-based tools for tutoring organizations or districts to design and implement a new tutoring program or improve an existing one.
- [Funding Tutoring Programs](#) A summary of funding sources for High-Impact Tutoring programs.
- [Tutoring Quality Improvement System](#) A rapid, free, and research-based tool for developing and existing tutoring programs to assess their program's quality against industry standards and receive targeted recommendations to improve program quality.
- [High-Impact Tutoring: State of the Research and Priorities for Future Learning](#) A summary of tutoring research that identifies characteristics of high-impact tutoring.

Please explore our [website](#) to learn more about high-impact tutoring and access tools for developing and improving tutoring programs.