NATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

equalizing access to quality tutoring

Key Considerations for Designing High-Impact Tutoring Programs: Learning from NCLB Supplemental Education Services

Executive Summary

Researchers, across multiple studies, find that tutoring can dramatically accelerate student achievement in both math and reading.[1] However, previous efforts to expand access to tutoring through federally-mandated Supplemental Education Services (SES) under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 show little to no effect on student outcomes.[2] Now with over a billion dollars in federal covid-relief funding slated for tutoring, what can we learn from districts' experiences with SES to do better this time, so that this new tutoring lives up to its promise for students?

This brief draws on a systematic review of research to highlight ways that districts can improve current tutoring implementation using knowledge gained from SES.

What was NCLB SES and why is it still relevant today?

The No Child Left Behind Act included a "Supplemental Educational Services" (SES) provision which required schools in their second year of school improvement to make additional academic opportunities available through instruction available outside of the school day.

Key Takeaways

Districts can design tutoring programs to foster instructional quality, student engagement, and student learning.

❏ Integrate tutoring into the school day to maximize access for students who could benefit the most.

❏ Ensure that students have access to tutoring services as part of their regular academic support without requiring parental opt-in.

❏ Establish a budget to allow tutoring to occur 3-5 times a week over an extended period of time for a focus group of students.

❏ Identify an instructional strategy that supports differentiated tutoring instruction with a focus on students' assets and needs.

❏ If partnering with external tutoring providers, construct a request for proposals (RFP) to gather information on providers' instructional approaches and monitor implementation to assure quality instruction.

Parents had the option of enrolling their student in reading and/or math tutoring from a state-approved provider paid for by district NCLB dollars. While this market-based approach was intended to expand access to impactful tutoring, in practice providers had little incentive to assure quality or keep hourly rates in check.

Parents had limited access to information on provider effectiveness, few mechanisms were in place to limit provider's per-hour fees. Large national providers came to dominate the SES market.[3]

In contrast to the NCLB era, many current tutoring efforts are district-driven programs, with district leaders having a direct role in tutoring design and implementation. In studies of SES implementation across six urban school districts, researchers identified common implementation trends which influenced SES tutoring enrollment, attendance, and instructional quality. With this research in hand, districts are now in a position to avoid some of the common barriers seen to limit the success of SES tutoring programs.

Current Considerations for Districts Based on Knowledge Gained from NCLB Supplemental Education Services (SES)

1. **Integrate tutoring into the school day to maximize access for students who could benefit the most.**

   SES programs had low take-up across the board with only 17% of eligible students enrolled nationally from 2002 to 2006. Parents frequently cited both the time and location (out-of-school time and sometimes off-site) of SES tutoring as reasons their child didn't participate. Additionally, after-school tutoring competed with other activities with students leaving during tutoring sessions to attend clubs and sports.[4]

   Today, to build tutoring into the school day, some districts are creating intervention blocks or assigning tutors to support specific students during independent work time in core courses. The National Student Support Accelerator's District Playbook provides additional information on Scheduling Sessions and Boosting Enrollment and Attendance.

2. **Ensure that students have access to tutoring services as part of their regular academic support without requiring parental opt-in.**

   SES tutoring required parents to enroll their child in tutoring and to select a tutoring provider. Researchers found that despite district efforts to share information about SES programs, parents often lacked clarity on the services offered which limited enrollment.[5]

   Programs that require opt-in will rarely reach students who could benefit the most. Districts that schedule high-impact tutoring during the school day consider it part of their regular academic support and do not require parents to opt-in to the program.

3. **Establish a budget to allow tutoring to occur 3-5 times a week over an extended period of time for a focus group of students.**

   Students enrolled in SES tutoring rarely received a sufficient amount of tutoring to support their academic success in part because fixed per-student funding and high provider fees limited the number of sessions students could attend. Researchers studying SES were more likely to find student gains from tutoring when funding allowed for more tutoring hours.[6] The most effective tutoring programs provide tutoring at least three times per week.

The number of eligible students may exceed the available tutoring seats when districts provide the kind of intensive tutoring that has demonstrated great benefits for students. While, one option would be to reduce the intensity of tutoring - for example, providing it only one time per week - this approach is unlikely to produce desired results. Instead, districts can increase their budget for tutoring, focus tutoring on a small group of students, or reduce the duration of tutoring (for example to 10 or 12-week sessions), especially for students with not as intensive needs. The District Playbook provides additional information on Developing a Tutoring Budget and Identifying Funding Sources.

4. **Identify an instructional strategy that supports differentiated tutoring instruction with a focus on students' assets and needs.**

   High-impact tutoring is characterized by three or fewer students per tutor and high-quality instruction. While SES tutoring tended to take place one-on-one or in small groups, overall sessions rated low on measures of academic rigor and higher-order thinking. Many of the SES sessions that researchers observed relied on teacher-directed instruction and student self-directed completion of worksheets. In contrast, strong communication between tutoring providers and school and district staff helped to foster instructional coherence in SES programs. Some districts invited tutoring staff to relevant district-run professional development, requiring students' tutoring learning goals to map onto district targets, and sharing information on students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and English language learner services.[7]

   Today, districts implementing high-impact tutoring use similar strategies to align tutoring with their school's instructional and curricular approaches. In addition, they support tutors' collection, analysis, and use of formative assessment data to personalize instruction and inform the design of future sessions, as described in TQIS quality standards. The National Student Support Accelerator provides guidance on aligning tutoring with district priorities and selecting early literacy instructional materials.

5. **If partnering with external tutoring providers, construct a request for proposals (RFP) to gather information on providers' instructional approaches and monitor implementation to assure quality instruction.**

   Researchers of SES had difficulty finding specific information on SES providers' instructional approaches. For example, while the majority of providers advertised that they could serve students with IEPs and Multilingual Learners, providers gave vague descriptions of practices such as slowing down or lowering the level of instruction. Districts also reported having particular difficulty directly observing the quality of virtual tutoring instruction.[8]

   Districts today can focus on quality instruction through multiple avenues, including requesting clarity and specificity from providers when they respond to requests for proposals. Scheduling tutoring during the school day with monitoring and supervision by school staff will also provide insights into the day-to-day instructional practices. Many districts identify a point-person for high-impact tutoring in each school. The District Playbook provides additional resources on identifying and collaborating with tutoring providers during the RFP process and after.

Endnotes

1. Dietrichson, et al., 2017; Fryer, 2017
2. Heinrich et al, 2014
3. Burch et al, 2007; Heinrich et al, 2010; Stewart & Good, 2016
4. Burch et al, 2016; Heinrich et al, 2010; Heinrich et al, 2014; Steinberg, 2011; Vernez et al, 2009; Zimmer et al, 2010
5. Heinrich et al, 2010
6. Heinrich et al, 2010
7. Burch et al, 2016; Good et al, 2014; Heinrich et al, 2010
8. Burch et al, 2016; Good et al, 2014

References

Burch, P., Steinberg, M., & Donovan, J. (2007). Supplemental educational services and NCLB: Policy assumptions, market practices, emerging issues. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 29(2), 115-133.

Burch, P., Good, A., & Heinrich, C. (2016). Improving Access To, Quality, and the Effectiveness of Digital Tutoring in K-12 Education. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 38(1), 65–87.

Dietrichson, J., Bøg, M., Filges, T., & Klint Jørgensen, A.-M. (2017). Academic Interventions for Elementary and Middle School Students With Low Socioeconomic Status: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Review of Educational Research, 87(2), 243–282.

Fryer, R. (2017). The Production of Human Capital in Developed Countries: Evidence from 196 Randomized Field Experiments. In A. V. Banerjee & E. Duflo (Eds.), Handbook of Field Experiments, Vol 2 (pp. 95-322). NorthHolland.

Good, A. G., Burch, P. E., Stewart, M. S., Acosta, R., & Heinrich, C. (2014). Instruction Matters: Lessons from a Mixed-Method Evaluation of Out-of-School Time Tutoring under No Child Left Behind. Teachers College Record, 116(3).

Heinrich, C. J., Meyer, R. H., & Whitten, G. (2010). Supplemental education services under no child left behind: Who signs up, and what do they gain? Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 32(2), 273.

Heinrich, C. J., Burch, P., Good, A., Acosta, R., Cheng, H., Dillender, M., . . . Stewart, M. (2014). Improving the implementation and effectiveness of out-of-school-time tutoring. Journal of Policy Analysis

Heinrich, C. J., & Good, A. (2018). informed practice improvements: exploring linkages between school district use of research evidence and educational outcomes over time. School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 29(3), 418-445.

Stewart, M. S., & Good, A. G. (2016). Marketing, information, and parental choice: A Comparative case study of third-party, federally funded out-of-school-time services. PJE.Peabody Journal of Education, 91(1), 100-120.

Steinberg, M. P. (2011). Educational choice and student participation: The case of the supplemental educational services provision in Chicago Public Schools. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 33(2), 159.

Vernez, G., Naftel, S., Ross, K., Le Floch, K. C., Beighley, C., & Gill, B. (2009). State and Local Implementation of the" No Child Left Behind Act". Volume VII--Title I School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services. US Department of Education.

Zimmer, R., Hamilton, L., & Christina, R. (2010). After-school tutoring in the context of no child left behind: Effectiveness of two programs in the Pittsburgh public schools. Economics of education Review, 29(1), 18-28.