



Introduction

With the continued disruption of learning for K–12 students due to the ongoing pandemic, getting students on grade level is an urgent need for most districts. Even after heroic efforts by educators to continue teaching students remotely, in person, or a hybrid learning model, many learners have fallen behind. The impacted students are the ones who were underserved before the pandemic: low-income students, students without access to technology, special education students, and non-English speaking students.

The federal government has directed millions of dollars to K–12 education with the specific goal of getting students back on grade level after the lost instructional time. Although the language of the American Relief Plan Act refers to “learning loss” and assigns specific practices to correct it, educators prefer the term “unfinished learning” rather than “learning loss” or “learning gaps.” Leading educators to believe that this term redirects the focus away from “fixing students” toward a focus on the systemic changes needed to meet the needs of all students.¹

In April 2021, a joint memo to the Acting Assistant Secretary of the US Department of Education was sent from a coalition of The Education Trust; Education Reform Now; FutureEd; the Center for American Progress; the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University; and the Board of Directors at the Success for All Foundation. This memo urged the department to support states and districts in implementing effective, evidence-based interventions to accelerate learning.

Specifically, they advocated that states set rigorous standards for high-impact tutoring programs that are research and evidence-based and target students most impacted by the pandemic to accelerate student learning toward academic growth.²



What is High-Impact Tutoring?

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University defines tutoring as a form of teaching—either one-to-one or in a small group. “High-impact tutoring leads to substantial learning gains for students by supplementing (but not replacing) students’ classroom experiences.

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.future-ed.org/unfinished-instruction-accelerated-learning-and-tutoring/>

² Ibid.



High-impact tutoring responds to individual needs and complements students' existing curriculum."³

Components of effective high-impact tutoring programs include a specified weekly time commitment, a strong relationship between student and tutor, alignment with the curriculum, progress monitoring of student's knowledge and skills, and oversight/coaching of tutors to maintain efficacy. For tutoring approaches to be effective, students must spend a substantial amount of time working with their tutor.⁴

High-dosage tutoring, another name for this type of tutoring, is not remedial work. It focuses on scaffolding content so students can access new learning that is built on their knowledge and skills base.⁵

What It is Not

High-Impact Tutoring is beneficial for all students and should be treated as a support rather than stand-alone as a remediation tool. Other red flags for tutoring programs that do not qualify as high impact include:

- Low dosage: it occurs weekly or less than 30 minutes per session; offered as optional, or with higher than a 3:1 student-tutor ratio
- Provided by an unqualified tutor: a peer, a high-school volunteer, or untrained tutor
- Decontextualized: sitting in front of a computer; focused only on discrete skills or filling out worksheets
- Replacement: a substitute for other intensive interventions; in place of classroom instruction; or a cause for students to miss content area classes⁶

Research Supports the Efficacy of High-Impact Tutoring

According to research, frequent tutoring is one of the best ways to support students' academic progress. Tutoring has a greater impact on student learning than other factors, such as teacher training, curriculum, extending the school day, or teacher evaluations.⁷

Researchers Carly D. Robinson and Susanna Loeb conducted a meta-analysis of the existing research into high-impact tutoring. They found that research has consistently demonstrated the positive effects that tutoring interventions have on student learning. Although they were not able to link specific program characteristics to student growth, they found that high-impact tutoring programs have the following characteristics:

³ Retrieved from <https://studentsupportaccelerator.org/about/high-impact-tutoring>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Retrieved from https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/HighDosageTutoringGuidance.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-8-considerations-for-designing-high-impact-tutoring/2021/06>

- High-dosage—a minimum of three or more sessions per week; 30–60 minutes each
- A strong tutor-student relationship
- Formative assessments to monitor student learning
- Alignment with school curriculum
- Formal training and support for tutors⁸

In an earlier meta-analysis, researchers examined interventions for low socio-economic students in elementary and middle school. Tutoring was singled out as the most common and the most effective intervention for these students, with an average effect size of 0.36-standard deviations on standardized academic tests with a 95 percent confidence interval.⁹

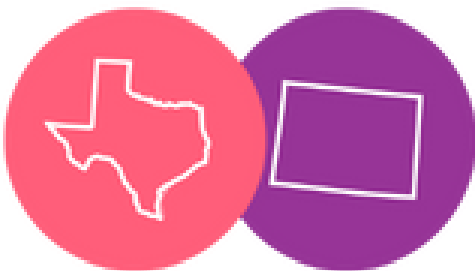
Robinson and Loeb observed that while the effectiveness of individual tutoring programs varies, the academic literature suggests that the drivers of high-impact tutoring are:

- Increased instructional time
- Increased customization/personalization of learning
- Improved pedagogy
- Positive social connection between students and tutors



Robinson and Loeb determined that tutoring interventions were need-driven and targeted struggling students as they examined the research. They proposed that research be conducted on universal implementations, resulting in reduced social stigma for students receiving tutoring. The research team also noted that tutors with more training in social-emotional learning and cultural competency might be more successful in responding to students' social-emotional needs as they would have a framework for teaching students of all backgrounds.¹⁰

Most research studies are focused on early grade reading. However, researchers found that tutoring is effective for all grade levels, including middle and high school grades. Evidence is most substantial for reading-focused tutoring for K–2 and math-focused tutoring for older students.



Texas and Colorado Lead the Way for Comprehensive High-Impact Tutoring

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has been decisive and prescriptive about high-impact tutoring to comply with Texas HB

⁸ Retrieved from https://studentsupportaccelerator.org/sites/default/files/Accelerator_Research_Agenda.pdf

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

4545 passed in June 2021. TEA's comprehensive approach to training educators and implementing high-impact tutoring across the state is a model for other states. HB 4545 specifies that when a student in grades 3–8 fails to score satisfactorily on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program, the school district must provide supplemental instruction during the following summer or school year.

Unfinished learning as a result of the pandemic is currently a major driver for increased tutoring programs, but the students who struggled the most are students who were already struggling before the pandemic. The Texas program makes these students a high priority as determined by the Spring 2021 state tests. "High-impact tutoring programs that provide opportunities to close learning gaps for students, thus improving and enhancing long-term outcomes, can be leveraged as part of the broader equity plans and structures that districts have in place or are working to implement."¹¹

TEA created several resources for school districts including, training webinars and workshops and a list of approved providers. [The High Impact Tutoring Toolkit](#) includes a summary of the research, key principles for successful implementation, and program design to implement the program with fidelity. Tutoring studies reveal that the effect of programs conducted during the school day are twice as large as those conducted outside of school.

According to the toolkit, key principles of high-impact tutoring include:

- Well-trained, consistent tutors
- High-quality instruction material aligned to standards and core classwork
- One-to-one or small group instruction
- Embedded during the school day
- At least three sessions per week
- Data-driven with tutors building and delivering sessions around student strengths

















Colorado is another state leading the way in adopting high-impact tutoring programs. Their HB21-1234 creates a statewide high-impact tutoring program to provide grants to school districts and charter schools. The bill is intended to help accelerate learning for low-income or underserved students, students of color, or students in rural areas after the disruptions of the last two school years. By providing supplemental instruction from trained tutors during the school day, Colorado legislators and educators hope to accelerate learning to move students to grade level proficiency.¹²

¹¹ Retrieved from https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/high_impact_tutoring_toolkit.pdf

¹² Retrieved from <http://edreformnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/State-Guidance-for-High-Impact-Tutoring-5.26-C.pdf>

Checklist for Evaluating High-Impact Tutoring Programs

Use this list as a guide for evaluating best-in-class tutoring programs for your district.

Customized	Tutoring provider tailors program to the needs of your district.	
ESSA Compliant	ESSA research- and evidence-based intervention designed to accelerate learning outcomes for academic gains.	
Digital Promise Certification	The tutoring program has been through Digital Promise's rigorous assessment process and determined it qualifies for the Research-Based Design Product Certification.	
Frequency	Tutoring occurs in three or more sessions per week.	
Data-driven	Formative assessments and progress monitoring allow educators to make instructional decisions in real time.	
1:1 Instruction	Live 1:1 online scheduled tutoring sessions that support individualized student needs. Targeted test prep and 24/7 homework help supports flexible learning models.	
Personnel	A wide variety of tutors can successfully improve student outcomes if they receive adequate training and support.	
Focus	Student's individualized personal learning plan aligns with the curriculum, learning standards, and district's instructional goals.	
Measurement	Data use and ongoing informal assessments allow tutors to individualize instruction for each student.	
Relationships	Ensuring students have a consistent tutor over time may help facilitate positive student-tutor relationships.	
Curriculum	High-quality instructional materials aligned to classroom content allows tutors to reinforce and support teachers' instruction.	
Scheduling	Interventions during the school day yield greater gains than those after-school or during the summer.	
Delivery Mode	Most research has focused on in-person tutoring, but there is emerging evidence for effective virtual tutoring.	
Prioritization	Target lower-performing students and those students most in need of personalized instruction.	

Use Federal Funds for Evidence-Based High-Impact Tutoring to Accelerate Learning

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Congress has required that states and districts designate at least 5 percent and 20 percent of the \$122 billion allocated to K–12 schools to recovery from learning loss. Significantly, this amount of money totals \$28 billion to spend on unfinished learning across the country. State leaders must ensure that both state and district funds from the ARPA are used for interventions that are evidence-based towards students who were most impacted by unfinished learning during the pandemic. High-impact tutoring [programs are effective](#). Students have gained one to two years of math and one year in English language arts.

Other federal sources of funds for high-impact tutoring programs include the first two COVID-relief bills, the CARES Act and the CRSSA. Title I funds, Title II funds for building the teacher pipeline, and Title III funds for English Language Learners are also approved for this purpose.¹³

Results from High-Impact Tutoring: A Case Study

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPSS) is an urban Title I district serving a large number of at-risk students. 84 percent of students are from low-income families. Baltimore city students faced a double setback: first from the changing standards of Maryland's College and Career Readiness Standards and then the shift to 100 percent remote learning as a result of the pandemic.

[FEV Tutor](#) worked with instructional leaders at seven schools in Community Learning Network #6 (CLN-6) during the 2018-19 school year. They worked with CLN-6 to customize tutoring models to drive achievement gains in Math and ELA. Tutoring was delivered onsite during the school day and after school.

Working with the district's Achievement and Accountability Office in Spring 2019, FEV Tutor was able to analyze MCAP/PARCC growth in Math and ELA across the seven schools. Results showed a direct correlation between participation in FEV Tutor and elevated MCAP/PARCC performance.

After the first year's success, FEV Tutor and BCPSS expanded to 20 schools. In March 2020, when the pandemic forced the shift to a remote learning model, FEV Tutor employed its Family & Student Engagement Team to drive participation in at-home tutoring through the rest of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years.

Student participants who engaged in the recommended dosage of 15+ tutoring lessons scored an average +32.04 points higher than non-participants.



¹³ Retrieved from https://studentsupportaccelerator.org/sites/default/files/Accelerator_Research_Agenda.pdf

Digital Promise's Certification of Research-Based Product Design

Educators want and the law requires that districts purchase evidence-based solutions for Math and ELA. Even with “award-winning” products, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether a product has been developed with a rigorous research base. Districts often require that an unbiased third party review the product’s research base to determine efficacy prior to purchase.



[Digital Promise](#) has established a rigorous assessment process to determine whether products have been designed according to learning research. To earn the Research-Based Design Product Certification, [FEV Tutor](#) submitted evidence to demonstrate that:

1. They consulted rigorous and empirical research and demonstrated their logic model for product design decisions;
2. They developed a theoretical framework grounded in research about how people learn to drive product planning and decision making; and
3. They publish the product’s research basis in a form the public can easily access.

For an infographic of the detailed FEV Tutor Logic Model, click [here](#).

Conclusion

As a result of the pandemic and closed schools, many more students suffer from unfinished learning as a result of remote learning than when schools offer in-person learning. Not surprisingly, the students at greatest risk are the same students who have been marginalized in the past. This includes low-income, minority, and special education students as well as English learners. High-impact tutoring has shown the greatest impact on these students. However, it is essential to note that students who have unfinished learning come from across the spectrum as a result of the pandemic.



Choosing a tutoring program that has proven effective, is based on rigorous research, aligns with the curriculum, and incorporates best practices for effective 1:1 tutoring is of greater importance now than it ever has been. Students have lost ground during the last 18 months, and the purpose of high-impact tutoring is to get them back to grade level work as quickly as possible. FEV Tutor is a proven program, certified by Digital Promise, with a mission to make high-quality, online learning options available to all students at all times.

FEV Tutor has been approved for purchase in many states, including Texas where it [has been approved](#) as a full-service member of the state’s new Vetted Texas Tutoring Corps (VTTC). The

TEA vetted all members to ensure that they have the research-based criteria for high-impact tutoring.



About FEV Tutor

Based in Boston, FEV Tutor is the leading research and evidence-based online tutoring platform working nationally to effect change in K-12 education. Its ESSA-approved programs are strategically designed in close collaboration with each partner school, district, charter school, and other organizations to accelerate learning for every student. FEV Tutor leverages technology to deliver 1:1 high-impact and transformative personalized learning pathways through live, virtual tutoring sessions. For more information on FEV Tutor, visit fevtutor.com or follow on [Twitter](#).

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