

LEADING FOR ACTION

An Insight Report on
K–12 Tutoring Programs

● TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Us	3
Gratitude to Districts.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Purpose of This Report.....	6
Introduction.....	7
▪ Overview of Featured School Districts	
▪ Why These Districts?	
▪ Prompting Thoughts	
Section 1: Key Decision Points.....	11
▪ Prioritizing Students for Tutoring	
▪ Internal vs. External Programs and Providers	
▪ Methods of Program Delivery	
Section 2: Iterative Improvement.....	16
▪ Buy-In Matters	
▪ Dedicated Implementation Support	
▪ Relationships Matter	
▪ Think Strategically About Scheduling	
▪ Leverage Multiple Dimensions of Evaluation	
Section 3: Top Tips and Lessons Learned.....	28
Conclusion.....	30
Appendix.....	32
Our Reviewers.....	33
Acknowledgments.....	33

ABOUT US

The Center for Education Market Dynamics (CEMD) is an emerging nonprofit K-12 market intelligence organization. CEMD is dedicated to improving academic outcomes for underserved students by expanding the use of high-quality teaching and learning solutions. CEMD exists to ensure that education leaders nationwide have essential market information to make the best possible decisions on behalf of their students. CEMD:



Illuminates the market – aggregating market research and data, and disseminating it thoughtfully across the sector.



Guides the market – offering support and resources to engage with its complexities.



Elevates the market – advocating for change so that the market works more effectively for underserved students.

The CEMD lens is one of **market-informed impact**. CEMD supports education leaders to make informed decisions about instructional products and services faster.



“It’s helpful that this is from a district’s perspective. The value of what [CEMD] is working on is that from the beginning, I could find the districts that have similar goals, values, budgets, and personnel, and see where they stand, and that helps **smooth the path towards change.**”

– Cheryl Dobbertein, Director of Secondary Education,
East Irondequoit School District



GRATITUDE TO DISTRICTS

This report would not be possible without the district leaders who generously shared their time and allowed CEMD a closer look into their tutoring programs. CEMD is deeply grateful to the following district leaders for their commitment as educators to the students and communities they serve; and for their authenticity and willingness to share their stories to help other leaders.



Baltimore City Public Schools

Matt Barrow | *City Schools Coordinator of Academic Tutoring*



Chicago Public Schools

Kelli Easterly | *Executive Director of STEM*

Corey Morrison | *Director of Mathematics*



Clayton County Public Schools

Angela Hutton | *K-12 Intervention Lead*

Dr. Tonya Clarke | *Coordinator of K-12 Mathematics*



Denver Public Schools

Angelin Thompson | *Director of Extended Academic Learning*

Susan Cheng | *Program Manager*



Ector County Independent School District

Lisa Wills | *Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction*

Carina Escajeda | *Coordinator of High Impact Tutoring*



Guilford County Schools

Dr. Faith Freeman | *Co-Director at the Institute for Partnerships in Education at UNC Greensboro (Former Director of STEM at GCS)*

Kara Hamilton | *Director of Tutoring*



Lenoir City Schools

Cherie Long | *District-wide Mathematics/Science Instructional Coach*

Shannon Tufts | *District-wide Literacy Instructional Coach*

Shawn Walker | *Student Success Coordinator*



New York City Public Schools

Andrew Fletcher | *Director of Strategic Partnerships*

Dr. Katie Pace Miles | *Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education at Brooklyn College, CUNY*



Orange County Public Schools

Jennifer Bellinger | *Minority Achievement Officer*

Kate Demory | *District Resource Teacher*

CEMD also thanks Vanessa Hilton, Chief Academic Officer, Pasco County Schools, whose knowledge and insight have been integral in developing the related *In Real Life: Targeted Tutoring* webinar series.

“ As educators, I look at this work, this is mission work for me, and I don't see myself learning great things and hoarding it from others because they're all our kids, no matter where they live. And if something is working for us, we should be willing to share with others and let them try it. It may or may not work for them, but if you find something that you think is impactful and working for kids, it is your obligation, I believe, to share that...letting our light shine wherever we can.”

– **Angelin Thompson, Director of Extended Academic Learning,
Denver Public Schools**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education for millions of students. Across the country, school districts are now implementing high-impact tutoring as a recovery strategy; over **\$700 million** of state Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds have been invested in tutoring.¹ In a national survey of 1,200 school leaders, almost half reported adopting one-on-one or small group tutoring during the 2020-21 school year.² Many districts launched tutoring programs mid-pandemic, with a focus on a key subset of students, and are now expanding these programs to support learning acceleration more broadly.

Today, three years after the initial wave of nationwide school closures, education leaders are strengthening tutoring programs to align with long-term strategic goals, and **shifting from reactive to proactive tutoring program design.**

This report highlights districts across the country that have established successful K-12 tutoring programs. Drawing on nine case studies that CEMD developed with district leaders, the report offers a deeper look into the real-life challenges and wins of implementation. The cases highlight early insights on process and structure, strategies that worked, and key lessons learned across a variety of program types.

¹CCSSO. (2023). The Road to Recovery: How States are Using Federal Relief Funding to Scale High-Impact Tutoring [PDF]. Retrieved March 19, 2023 from <https://753a0706.flowpaper.com/CCSSOESSERTutoring/>

²RAND Corporation. (2021). COVID-19 Response Survey, Spring 2021 [Data set]. Retrieved March 17, 2023 from <https://www.rand.org/education-and-labor/projects/oep/surveys/items/covid-19-response-survey-crs-spring-2021.html>

The first section of the report discusses **key considerations and decision points** that district leaders faced when launching a tutoring program, including:

- **Which** students and/or schools to prioritize for tutoring services,
- **Whether** to launch an internal tutoring program or contract with an external vendor, and
- **How** to leverage different methods of program delivery to maximize impact.

The second section focuses on implementation and iterative improvement. Pandemic-related learning loss prompted the launch of many new tutoring programs – but it was a focus on **incremental, iterative improvement** that drove success over time. This report discusses key enablers of district cultures of continual improvement, including:

- **Building** buy-in with teachers, students, and the community,
- **Dedicating** support to on-the-ground program rollout,
- **Developing** and prioritizing meaningful, collaborative relationships,
- **Scheduling** tutoring sessions purposefully to maximize student attendance and engagement, and
- **Leveraging** evaluation to gather feedback and monitor progress.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

District leaders' decision-making powerfully impacts student outcomes. But actionable information to guide decision-making is not always available, and as a result, the best learning solutions often don't reach the students who need them most. With this report, CEMD seeks to provide support for education leaders in states, districts, school boards, and communities to:

Engage in conversations about implementing high-impact tutoring. This report can guide discussions as leaders advocate for and/or evaluate tutoring programs in their own states and districts.

Support strategic decision-making. The comparative nature of this compendium enables leaders to identify and learn from the tutoring programs that are most relevant to them.

Elevate timing, transition, and sustainability considerations. As ESSER spending deadlines loom, the outcomes of current tutoring programs can help inform decisions about tutoring in the future.

This report offers leaders a pragmatic blueprint for deploying tutoring to get meaningful, sustainable student progress.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 had grim impacts on student learning nationwide. Math achievement saw a historically unprecedented dip, with the average student losing over half a school year's worth of growth. Reading scores also fell for the first time in over two decades, with students losing the equivalent of two months of learning.³

While all students felt the impacts of disrupted learning, historically underserved students felt, and continue to feel, outsized effects. The pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequities faced by many students of color and students experiencing poverty. It added to the opportunity debt already owed to those who have been historically excluded from equitable participation in public education systems.⁴ In response to this crisis, many districts across the country rushed to launch high-impact tutoring.

Research suggests that when it's implemented with fidelity, high-impact tutoring is one of the most effective methods for producing large learning gains.⁵



HIGH-IMPACT TUTORING

High-impact tutoring is an evidence-based practice designed to accelerate student

learning through intensive, individualized support. According to the [National Student Support Accelerator](#), high-impact tutoring programs are grounded in:

- **Equity** (accessibility to students who could benefit most)
- Safety (policies, training, and systems to ensure the safety of students and their data)
- Cohesion (program elements that align and work effectively together)

Characteristics of high-impact tutoring programs include:

- High-quality instruction (high-dosage, using high-quality materials)
- Data use (instruction driven by data)
- Strong tutors (consistent and well-supported)
- Learning integration (embedded into and/or coordinated with schools and districts)

Although often used interchangeably, this report differentiates “high-dosage” (three or more sessions per week for at least 30 minutes per session) from “high-impact”, as dosage is only one component of high-impact tutoring.


³Fahle, E., Kane, T.J., Patterson, T., Reardon, S.F., & Staiger, D.O. (2022) Local Achievement Impacts of the Pandemic [PDF]. Education Recovery Scorecard. Retrieved March 17, 2023, from https://educationrecoveryscorecard.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Education-Recovery-Scorecard_Key-Findings_102822.pdf

⁴National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Long-Term Trend Assessment Highlights: 2022 Reading and Mathematics Assessments. The Nation's Report Card. Retrieved March 17, 2023 from <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/ltt/2022/>

⁵Nickow, A., Oreopoulos, P., & Quan, V. (2020). The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence. National Bureau of Economic Research (Working Paper No. 27476.) https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27476/w27476.pdf

As the ESSER funding cliff approaches, districts are [planning ways](#) to make tutoring sustainable. Some districts, like [Denver Public Schools](#), intend to revise their budgets to ensure tutoring programs continue. Others, like [Guilford County Schools](#), [New York City Public Schools](#), and [Orange County Public Schools](#), have formed mutually beneficial partnerships to continue collaborating with external organizations and institutions of higher education around tutoring programs. As Angelin Thompson, Director of Extended Academic Learning in Denver, said, “If we determine over these three years that [tutoring] has been an effective strategy, it will not go away because federal funding goes away. We’ll find other funds, and we’ll keep the program.”



ESSER FUNDS
3 Pandemic Relief Bills
=\$190B 

THE LARGEST FEDERAL EDUCATION FUNDING IN U.S. HISTORY, MAKING OVER \$190B OF EMERGENCY FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

Schools must leverage ESSER funding by Sept. 2024.






































Overview of Featured School Districts

This report is intended as a tool to help education leaders [advocate](#) for tutoring programs and make key decisions about implementation. While there are many studies of tutoring outcomes, practical information on how to implement tutoring programs is equally important and much more scarce. For that reason, this compendium of case studies elevates leaders’ insights over quantitative outcomes, recognizing that many tutoring programs are still nascent. The report focuses especially on leaders’ pivotal decision moments and the hard tradeoffs they made.

On the following page is a summary of the districts profiled. Readers of this report can use this to identify districts similar to their own and to pinpoint relevant strategies.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

See individual case studies for full district summaries[†].

	#Students	#Schools	Funding Per Student	Tutoring Model	Program Type	Session Timing
 New York City Public Schools	1,058,888	1,859	\$24,040			
 Chicago Public Schools	330,411	636	\$16,418			
 Orange County Public Schools	206,058	202	\$10,368			
 Denver Public Schools	89,081	207	\$16,849			
 Baltimore City Public Schools	75,995	157	\$21,337			
 Guilford County Schools	70,047	126	\$10,846	 		
 Clayton County Public Schools	52,149	68	\$11,790			
 Ector County Independent School District	31,881	44	\$8,722			
 Lenoir City Schools	2,517	4	\$10,464			

District Summary Legend

-  High-Impact
-  On-Demand
-  Peer-to-Peer
-  Internal Partner
-  External Partner
-  University Partner
-  During/After School
-  During School Only

[†]Information on districts is accurate as of 2022-23.

Why These Districts?

With tutoring, as with all things in education, local context is key. For this reason, the case studies discuss strategies that are working well across a **variety of locations, district sizes, and program types.**

“

If we determine over these three years that [tutoring] has been an effective strategy, it will not go away because federal funding goes away. We'll find other funds, and we'll keep the program.”

– **Angelin Thompson, Director of Extended Academic Learning,
Denver Public Schools**

Several districts in this report have more than one tutoring program underway; the cases focus on the programs that were most developed as of this writing. Most programs target math and literacy, though some, such as **Baltimore City Public Schools** and **Clayton County Public Schools**, provide tutoring across a range of K-12 subjects.

The cases do not spotlight the “best” tutoring programs through a typical outcomes-based lens, but instead seek to illuminate core lessons learned by people on the ground, for the benefit of others in their shoes.[†]

Prompting Thoughts



How would you describe the current stage of your tutoring program? Where are you in decision-making? What are you still trying to figure out?



How does iterative improvement factor into your district's tutoring program?



If your aim is to continue your tutoring program post-ESSER, what key stakeholders need to know about your outcomes to build the case for the work ahead?

[†]For more information on quantitative assessment data from these tutoring programs, see the individual district case studies.

KEY DECISION POINTS

Leaders' decisions inevitably involved practical considerations and trade-offs.

The case studies consistently underscore how leaders weighed their understanding of best practices against local conditions and constraints. They navigated, for example, which students to prioritize, whether and how to tap external providers, and how exactly to deliver tutoring against a real-world backdrop of scheduling, funding, and personnel. Below, we discuss how context informed these critical choices.

Prioritizing Students For Tutoring

A crucial early decision for district leaders was **which students and/or schools to prioritize**. Most pilot programs targeted a limited group of students, identified on the basis of math and literacy scores and/or teacher recommendations. There were other, broader models of student selection as well; we discuss each approach below.

The most common method of selecting students for district tutoring programs was **proficiency-based**. For example, **Lenoir City Schools** is a small school district southwest of Knoxville, Tennessee. Lenoir City piloted an intensive tutoring program for high school math students in the fall of 2021. The district initially targeted students who were “approaching proficiency” on math and literacy state tests (i.e., scoring in the 35th-50th percentile). Pleased with the enthusiastic community response to the pilot, Lenoir City soon thereafter scaled tutoring district-wide. Similarly, the tutoring program in New York targeted “striving readers” – those struggling to read on grade level, as identified by school-based assessments. In **Ector County Independent School District**, district leadership leveraged data from the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test and teacher input to determine which students would most benefit from tutoring.

Some district tutoring programs selected **whole schools** as the unit of intervention for access to tutoring. Clayton County, a large Georgia school district just south of metro Atlanta, was closed for in-person learning for a full year-and-a-half during the pandemic. They piloted virtual, on-demand tutoring in 2020, in the midst of this closure. For the pilot program, Clayton County targeted a cross-section of 15 elementary, middle, and high schools that were identified as high-need based on Georgia state standardized test outcomes. In **Chicago Public Schools**, whole-school tutoring sites were determined based on academic need, school capacity, and staff input.

Chicago is unique among the case studies because its tutoring program is both longstanding and well-studied.⁶ In 2012, Chicago piloted a tutoring program with the external vendor [Saga Education](#) (then known as Match Education) in one high school. This single seed grew into a 22-school program. To scale up the program, the district STEM office selected additional schools to participate based on both student math outcomes and site capacity to bring in the program. Within schools, teachers and school administrators selected student participants based on academic need.

Other districts prioritized student groups using additional factors such as **parental input** and **student demographics**. For example, in Guilford County, parents could request virtual tutoring at any time. Guilford County launched two distinct programs - an in-person, high-dosage program; and a Virtual Helpline (available for all students grades 3-12 for Math and ELA). For the in-person program, Guilford County based selection on academic need, providing high-impact tutoring to all K-12 students whose NWEA MAP scores were in the 20th percentile or below. For the Virtual Helpline, parents were able to sign their children up for sessions and even request specific tutors. Denver was the only district studied to target students demographically: they explicitly prioritized students of color, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and those who were most adversely affected by the pandemic. Teachers also played a key role in identifying students to participate.

“

Regarding the OCPs program's unique structure and approach:

“This is truly sought out by the students,” she emphasized, noting that several students serve as tutors in one subject while being tutored in another.

- Kate Demory, District Resource Teacher, Orange County Public Schools

Finally, while many tutoring programs targeted specific students for interventions, Orange County decided on a different design for its unique **peer tutoring** initiative. Students requested tutoring themselves via an online application, and could ask for a specific tutor and for help in specific subjects. Similarly, students who met the academic requirements to serve as tutors initiated the process themselves by submitting an online application. Parents and caregivers could also request tutors through the same system.

⁶ Guryan, J., Ludwig, J., Bhatt, M. P., Cook, P. J., Davis, J. M. V., Dodge, K., Farkas, G., Jr, R. G. F., Mayer, S., Pollack, H., & Steinberg, L. (2021). Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes Among Adolescents. National Bureau of Economic Research (Working Paper Series No. 28531). <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28531>

A crucial early decision for district leaders was **which students and/or schools to prioritize.**



Baltimore City Public Schools

TSI program targets **K-2 students** needing Tier 2 early literacy support.

External program serves **K-12 students** who are below grade level and whose school attendance is at least 80%.



Chicago Public Schools

STEM office selected **22 participant schools** based on student math outcomes and school capacity.

Within schools, teachers and school administrators select students based on academic need.



Clayton County Public Schools

The pilot targeted **15 elementary, middle, and high schools** identified as highest-need.

It has now **expanded to all 68 schools.**



Denver Public Schools

The program explicitly targets **students of color, English learners, students with disabilities**, and those most adversely affected by the pandemic.



Ector County Independent School District

The program **does not target any set/specific student groups**, but decision-making leverages test data and the input of teachers to determine which students would most benefit.



Guilford County Schools

The program targets **students based on academic need**, providing high-dosage tutoring to all **K-12 students** in the 20th percentile and below.

Virtual, on-demand homework help is open to **all students in grades 3-12.**



Lenoir City Schools

Pilot targeted **students based on ACT scores** with major gaps in math prep; full program focuses on **students “approaching proficiency”** (35-50th percentile).



NYC Public Schools

The program targets **“striving readers”** – those struggling to read on grade level, selected via a combination of school-reported reading level systems.



Orange County Public Schools

The program primarily targets **middle and high school students** who are struggling with math, with a particular focus on participants in the district’s Calculus Project.

Internal vs. External Programs and Providers

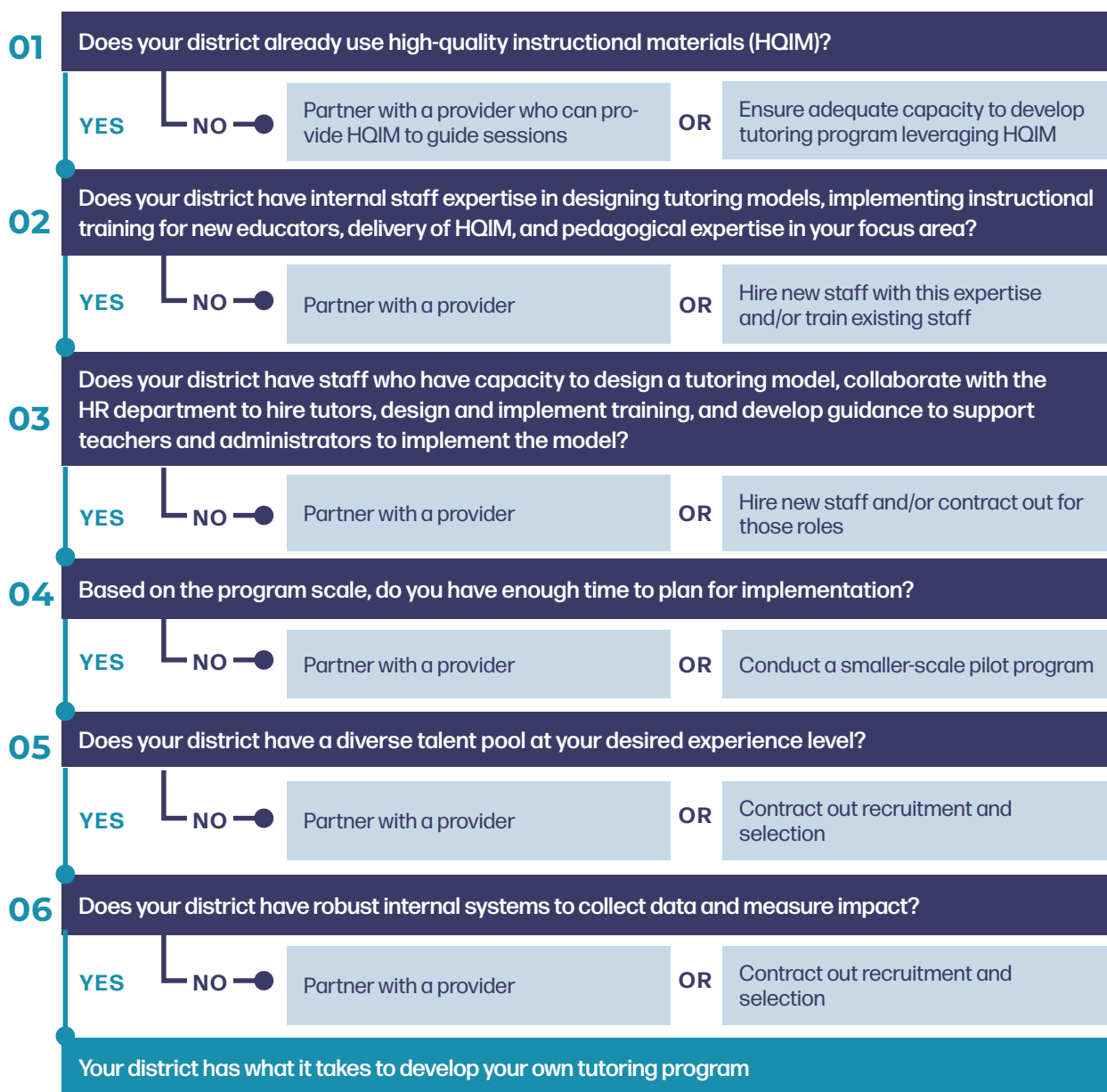
Another early conversation in many districts was about whether to launch an **internal tutoring program** or partner with an **external provider** for one or more **components of their program**. In this context, an internal program is one that does not contract with an external vendor for tutoring services. Internal tutoring programs are resource-intensive, and most districts in the case studies partnered with an external provider for tutoring services in some capacity.

Internal programs leverage existing school and district staff, and/or bring in additional staff through selection, training, and internal management. As an example, in fall 2021, Lenoir City piloted a tutoring program designed and run entirely by district staff. For the program rollout, the Tennessee Tutoring Corps supplied recruiting help, access to curriculum/resources, and additional funding – but district leadership officially hired and trained all tutors. In fall 2020, Guilford County also launched an internally-run, high-dosage tutoring program during the school day. They recruited tutors from area high schools and colleges, as well as through the North Carolina Education Corps. Strategic community partnerships, research-based practices, and

good communication were cornerstones of the Guilford County program, which drew national acclaim for its rapid growth and success. In addition to the internal program, Guilford County also implemented an on-demand Virtual Helpline (using a platform from Saga Education), with its own curriculum and tutors who are teachers from the district.

Most districts in this report worked with external partners, and cited **internal capacity, program size**, and the **scale and speed of implementation** as primary [factors for consideration](#).

When thinking about implementing a new program or expanding an existing tutoring effort, leaders can consider this decision tree⁷ to determine if, and what, to contract externally:



⁷National Student Support Accelerator. High-Impact Tutoring: District Playbook Workbook. Retrieved April 10, 2023 from <https://studentsupportaccelerator.org/sites/default/files/Workbook.pdf>

Tutoring programs are labor-intensive, requiring staff coordination, technical assistance, and case management. For some districts, like Ector County, staffing shortages and an influx of new teachers were reasons to opt for an external vendor. A tutoring program administered by an external provider helped “take some of the lift off” of teachers still getting their bearings. Some districts also wanted to leverage the existing expertise and experience of an external vendor, rather than reinvent the wheel internally. An example of this is Chicago, which launched a high-dosage tutoring program in 2012 to address stagnant academic growth among students, particularly in high school math. The district leaders partnered with [Urban Labs at the University of Chicago](#) to research other districts that had improved in this area, and selected Saga Education as an external vendor based on rigorous research of its effects in other districts. Their work with Saga was designed from the outset as a research partnership, which then expanded incrementally to serve more and more students.

The sheer **size of the district tutoring program** also drove some districts to partner with external vendors. Baltimore, for example, launched high-dosage literacy tutoring for K-2 students in January 2020, quickly followed by multi-subject tutoring for K-12 students in fall 2021. Its early literacy program served over 1,000 students across 14 schools, and its K-12 initiative served over **12,000 students**, with 13% of the district’s student body getting at least six weeks of high-dosage tutoring in 2021-2022. Baltimore was unique in that it leveraged both internal and external programs simultaneously. For the K-2 program, the district hired and trained tutors internally. For the broader K-12 program, the district partnered with **14 external vendors** to serve thousands of students with a range of learning needs across **all subjects**. The decision to partner with vendors for K-12 tutoring enabled Baltimore to target efforts based on schools’ unique needs, and to get the program off the ground quickly while still meeting the evidence-based criteria for ESSER funding.

The **scale and speed of implementation** was also a factor in this choice. The urgent need to reach a lot of students – and a lack of internal capacity in place to launch tutoring fast – compelled many districts to partner with an external provider. For example, Ector County had to implement tutoring quickly, as Texas state policy mandated it mid-pandemic, and their partnerships with [FEV Tutors](#), [AirTutors](#), and [Amplify](#) allowed them to do so. Individual schools



OUTCOMES-BASED CONTRACTING

Outcomes-based contracting (OBC) is a

strategy some districts use to strengthen relationships with providers and ensure they deliver at quality standards needed to accelerate learning. An OBC is a contingent agreement wherein a vendor receives a **base payment** for delivering services, with the rest of the payment contingent on **meeting agreed-upon outcomes**. OBCs raise expectations and mutual accountability for vendors, district staff, and school-based staff, and can ultimately lead to better implementation and better student outcomes. Check out the [Denver Public Schools Case Study](#) and the [Ector County Case Study](#) for examples of districts implementing OBC.

were allowed to select which vendors they preferred to work with, or were free to choose another provider or create an in-house program (although none did so). For other districts, using an external provider was a way to launch promptly, then expand on the tutoring program internally over time. For example, Chicago partnered with Saga Education to pilot a tutoring program in 2011, then launched an internal tutoring corps in 2021-22.

Methods of Program Delivery

Related to provider type, district leaders faced a key decision point on program delivery – in-person or virtual – and weighed this question from a variety of perspectives.

The age of the target student group(s) was an important consideration for many leaders. Virtual tutoring can be challenging for young students (i.e. early elementary) when it comes to navigating technology and staying engaged. More than one district leader recommended that for districts deploying virtual tutoring with younger students, they schedule sessions during school hours, with staff available for hands-on encouragement and help.

Some districts took a hybrid approach. Baltimore’s K-2 tutoring was delivered by trained paraprofessionals in-person, to groups of four students or fewer. For the district’s larger, externally-sourced tutoring program, delivery method depended on the vendor and student population, and schools were free to choose their own vendors. Other districts piloted more than one delivery method and tested what worked best. In Guilford County, for example, their internal tutoring program ran during the school day, and their on-demand, Virtual Helpline was available to all students during and after school.

All district leaders emphasized that, regardless of delivery method, consistent student attendance is of paramount importance. This means that scheduling sessions intentionally, and monitoring student attendance over time, is a critical element of in-person, virtual, and hybrid programs.

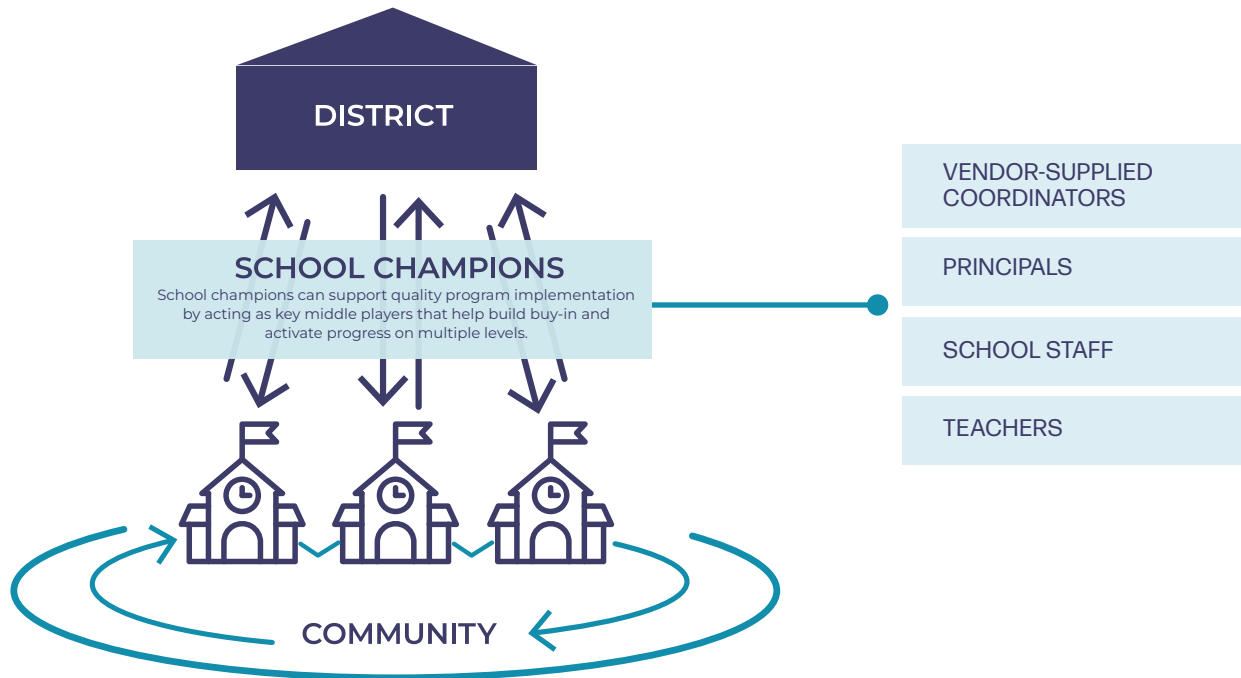
ITERATIVE IMPROVEMENT

Iterative improvement was central to success.

Across districts, a key ingredient of successful tutoring programs was the urgency of district leaders to act, and fast, to address the fallout of the pandemic. They were unable to fine-tune every detail of a new program in advance. So staying agile, course-correcting when needed, and continuously improving – with a coherent vision of high-quality instruction as a north star – helped districts grow successful tutoring programs over time. On the next page, we highlight common themes around creating a culture and practice of iterative improvement.

Buy-in matters.

Sustaining commitment at every level of the district drove success. Districts emphasized both the commitment of senior leaders and the importance of having “boots on the ground” to support implementation. Ector County, for example, focused especially on earning the up-front buy-in of schools when they launched tutoring in 2021. During program rollout, school principals played a large role in determining which provider(s) to use and how to implement tutoring at their schools. This strategy helped school leaders take ownership, and they were diligent in overseeing tutoring.



In Lenoir City, student and family buy-in was key. Prior to launching, district leaders surveyed the junior class about their interest, availability, and scheduling preferences; this process enabled them to identify about 20 students to participate in a 5-week, high-dosage tutoring pilot. The pilot was so successful that Lenoir City embarked on a rapid scaling effort the following year. As they've scaled up, they held onto much of the structure and ethos from the pilot program, especially the extensive outreach to families and students.

Part of building buy-in was **making the case for tutoring programs** as an imperative to address disrupted learning time. Leadership and local champions engaged with teachers, students, families, and caregivers; conveyed the urgency of the moment; and shared the evidence base for tutoring.

Building buy-in with teachers was particularly important. Districts involved teachers in tutoring programs in a range of ways, from recommending students, to coordinating tutors, to monitoring progress. In the case studies, success stories of tutoring often spread through organic teacher networks. In Orange County, for example, word spread among teachers about the pilot program's success, and demand for tutoring increased. In just one year, the program more than doubled in size.

Dedicated implementation support was necessary.

Multiple district leaders spoke to the value of **dedicated tutoring coordinators** to support implementation. The key was empowering the person(s) in this role to take ownership of day-to-day program operations and to ensure quality in practice.

In Clayton County, for example, critical aspects of successful implementation were a district “champion” for the program as well as “point people” charged with leading the initiative on the ground. Each school had three implementation leaders who trained teachers and students on the platform, facilitated sessions, and cracked technical problems as they arose.

“

We didn't just say to the campuses, 'Here's your tutoring provider, now go get busy with it.' It was constant, constant monitoring by us.”

– **Lisa Wills, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction,
Ector County Independent School District**

Ector County leadership also emphasized the importance of a dedicated coordinator who's responsible for brass tacks implementation in schools. School principals advised program rollout, and the Ector County tutoring coordinator directed the practicalities. **Lisa Wills, the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction**, described how intensive and ongoing district oversight brought all these pieces together.

In Denver, district leadership had to actively overcome logistics struggles at the program outset. In response to feedback, their external tutoring provider, [Cognition](#), supplied Denver with a dedicated staff member to monitor tutoring on the ground (at no additional cost) and to engage in weekly progress meetings with district leadership.

EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISTRICTS

Dedicated District Tutoring Coordinator

- Oversees full program rollout, responsible for brass tacks implementation in schools, monitors tutoring on the ground
- Often centralized role working across schools
- Could be existing district staff member or provided by external vendor

Local School Implementers

- Supports nuts and bolts of local program implementation on school campuses
- Help solve problems, make sure students attend sessions, troubleshoot tech, liaise with teachers and district leadership
- Could be existing school staff or designated site implementation leaders; some districts assign teams to each school to support with logistics and technology for tutoring programs

District & School Leadership

- Support oversight, liaise with district leadership and vendors, convey needs
- Some district leadership are hands-on during implementation, conducting site visits and check-ins to manage program rollout
- Principals often also have ownership and oversight in local program rollout

External Program Staff

- Team of external staff coordinated through district partnership(s) for tutoring program
- Work may include everything from session scheduling, ensuring protected time and space for students to engage in tutoring, & monitoring smooth access to technology
- e.g., CUNY Reading Corps Team

Relationships matter– this is human-centered work.

Managing relationships and messaging was a central part of district leaders' work leading up to and throughout tutoring implementation.

HERE ARE FIVE KEY RELATIONSHIPS AND HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS:



STUDENTS

Elevating student needs & voice, getting input on program design, fostering motivation through ownership of learning



TEACHERS

Investing in clear messaging & expectation-setting; getting buy-in; understanding needs, facilitating teacher-tutor collaboration & alignment



FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS

Engaging & edifying about the new program; getting buy-in; gaining advice and feedback; being adaptive to needs; communication



LOCAL COMMUNITY

Building mutually-beneficial partnerships; base for recruiting tutors, opportunities to strengthen SEL/role models for students



EXTERNAL VENDORS

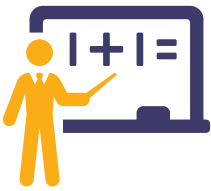
Sharing school & district feedback; working with vendor staff to design & implement programs, troubleshooting any issues

STUDENTS

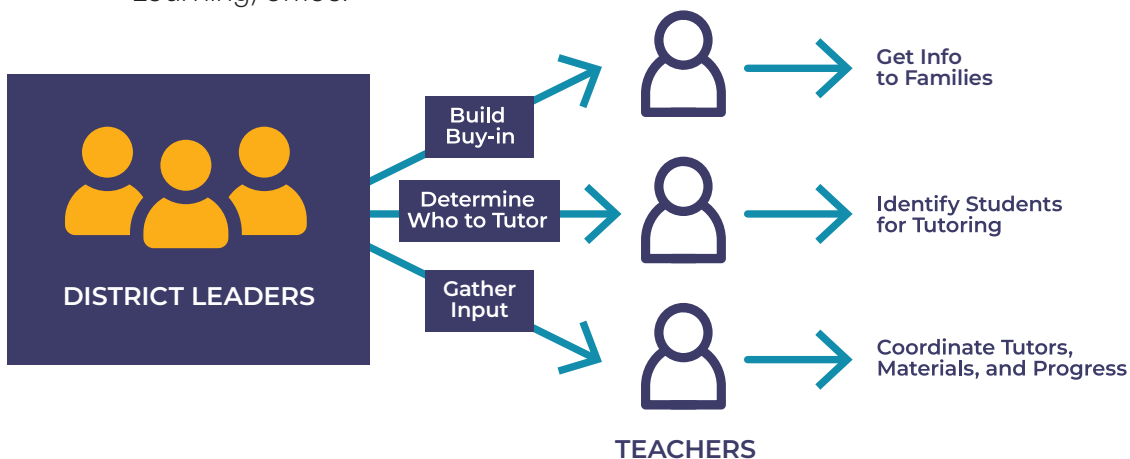


Soliciting advice and feedback from students as programs get underway can develop students' confidence and self-efficacy, and help them take ownership in accelerating their learning. For example, in Orange County, district leadership underscored the role of actively responding to student feedback and implementing changes in real time. Empowering students to take control of their academic experience has been essential to Orange County's tutoring strategy from day one. "The end result," said Demory (District Resource Teacher), "is a program that will feel like it was **built by the students.**"

TEACHERS



In terms of teachers, district leaders had success when they invested in clear messaging, expectation-setting, and ongoing dialogue. Districts involved teachers in tutoring programs differently, with more and less active roles. Some teachers played a big part in student selection for tutoring. For this reason, alignment on overarching district strategy and goals was critical. Teachers in Denver, for example, helped identify students to participate in tutoring, and their feedback was regularly solicited by Thompson's (Director of Extended Academic Learning) office.



Alignment between teachers and tutors on learning goals and instructional materials was also important. Districts that facilitated and built these relationships benefited from higher teacher morale and greater cohesion in the student experience. As implementation was underway in Lenoir City, district leaders realized they needed to reset on messaging to teachers. Some teachers expressed unease at the way tutors were seemingly getting outsized credit for student growth. **Shawn Walker, Student Success Coordinator** in Lenoir City, shared how he got better over time at building tutor-teacher communication and relationships, and at messaging to teachers. Specifically, Walker shared the baseball team metaphor he used - framing teachers as the "head coach" and tutors as "batting or pitching coaches" - to reinforce the interdependent nature of tutoring and classroom learning. What mattered was including teachers in the narrative of change. As Walker put it, "You're a part of this story, too - we could not do this without you."

FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS



Coordination and communication with families and caregivers helped ensure quality in implementation. In New York, for example, the K-2 program launched speedily in fall 2020 and relied on families to reach students by whatever means possible: CUNY tutors Zoomed into students' homes at their families' convenience throughout the week. During this early implementation phase, the tutoring program depended heavily on families' efforts to get students to attend and engage.

Communication with parents about why their students were in tutoring helped support attendance. District leaders in Lenoir City, for example, worked to change the narrative around the “type” of students that need tutoring. In talking with parents, staff emphasized that a child could be a rockstar student and still have experienced a setback during the pandemic. Another aspect of messaging was to differentiate high-impact tutoring from *remediation*, emphasizing that tutoring aligns with grade-level curriculum. [Family engagement](#) and open lines of communication with parents and caregivers are crucial to successful programs, especially if tutoring is conducted during out-of-school time.

In Orange County, Demory (District Resource Teacher) shared her top piece of advice for districts implementing tutoring programs: be adaptive to student and family needs and don't take feedback personally. “If you don't have the mindset to make changes in the moment, you will lose opportunities to make [your program] effective in a short amount of time,” she remarked. Orange County adjusted its communications strategy, for example, after learning that reminder emails about tutoring were often missed or overlooked. This led program leaders to implement a text message system that sent reminders on the morning of tutoring sessions. “Because life is busy for students and families, we also had to find ways to accommodate communication for day-of changes,” Demory added.



BUILDING MUTUAL VALUE

Successful tutoring programs often build mutually beneficial relationships with tutoring

providers. New York, for example, in partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY), launched an early literacy tutoring initiative, the CUNY Reading Corps, in the fall of 2020. The CUNY Reading Corps began during the pandemic shutdown, both to offer early literacy support to NYC students in acute need, and to help CUNY pre-service teachers gain field experience. **Dr. Katie Pace Miles, Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education at Brooklyn College, CUNY**, required her graduate and undergrad students to tutor as part of their early literacy courses. Dr. Miles noted, “*It has always been a two-pronged mission: improving pre-service teaching and supporting striving readers in under-resourced communities.*”

LOCAL COMMUNITY



Connection to the local community can be a huge boon to tutoring programs. Recognizing the importance of tutors who understand the local context, Guilford County, for example, drew its tutor base from area high schools and colleges. This included students at nearby North Carolina A&T State University, one of the largest Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the nation, and members of the North Carolina Education Corps. **Dr. Faith Freeman** spearheaded the tutoring program in her prior role in Guilford County as the **Director of STEM**, and noted that what began as an academic support program quickly became so much more: “We’re impacting kids academically, but we’re also having our [tutors serve] as mentors to a lot of these students.” She emphasized how powerful it is for students to see themselves reflected in their tutors.

EXTERNAL VENDORS



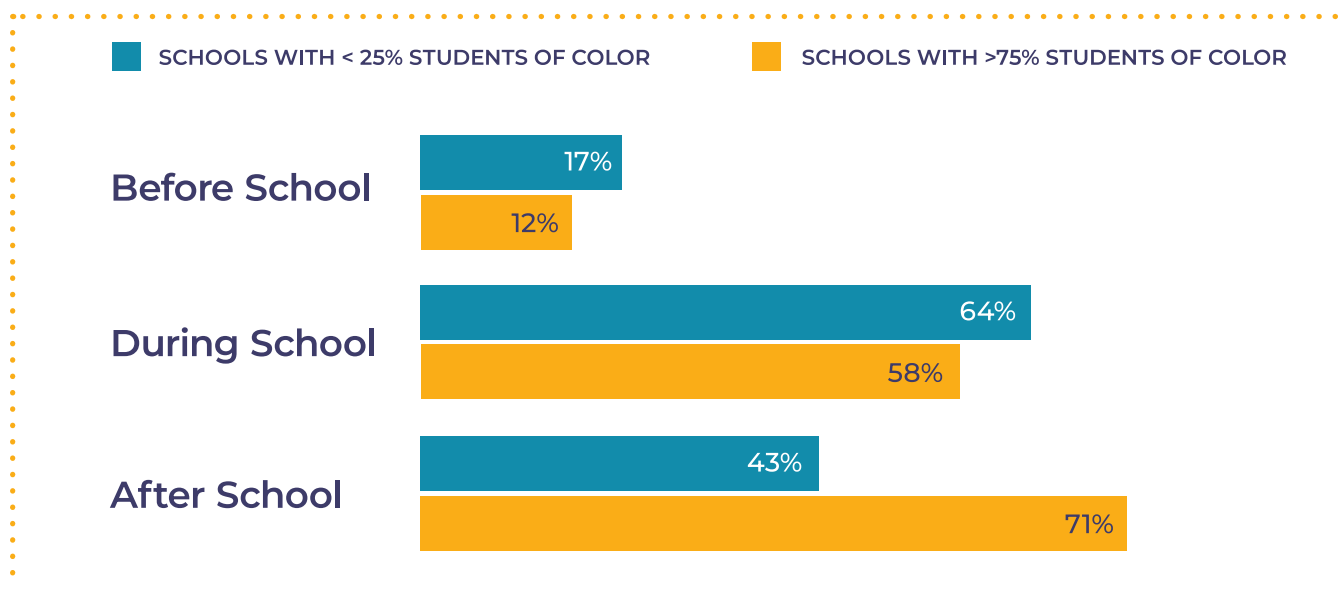
Relationships with vendors enabled districts to customize and improve program designs. As district leaders deepened relationships with their providers, they were better able to articulate their needs. **Kelli Easterly, Executive Director of STEM** at Chicago, for example, attributed much of their success with implementation to high levels of mutual trust and communication between Chicago and Saga Education. Their relationship with Saga began as a research partnership that grew into a tutoring program, which set the tone for incremental and collaborative adjustments along the way. “We need to trust that Saga is going to follow through at a high level with quality of service,” Easterly said, “and Saga needs to trust that we’re going to provide the pathway for them to do the work that they’ve been tasked to do.”

It’s crucial for district leaders to consider and invest in each of these relationships. By recognizing the needs of different stakeholder groups, district leaders can uncover important knowledge and perspectives, as well as build collective ownership of challenges and solutions.

Think strategically about scheduling.

Overcoming scheduling constraints was a common stumbling block, and many district leaders arrived at a solution through trial-and-error. A major theme of success was integration with the master schedule. As programs developed, more and more districts [intentionally blocked out time](#) during the school day for students to engage in tutoring. In Lenoir City, for example, **Shannon Tufts, District-wide Literacy Instructional Coach** shared: “We worked with the administration to revamp the master schedule so that [tutoring] was a priority for all students, so that we could service as many as we could...the time is sacred.” By weaving tutoring into the rhythm of students’ regular classes, Lenoir City was able to deliver tutoring to a vast swath of its overall student population. This design also enabled school staff to support students with attending sessions, and with (for hybrid or virtual programs) troubleshooting any technical difficulties. Since attendance is a key driver of student outcomes, many district leaders recommended shifting sessions to in-school hours, framing it as an issue of equitable access for the many students whose home lives might complicate tutoring during out-of-school hours.

Schools Serving 75% or More Students of Color More Likely to Provide Tutoring After School⁸



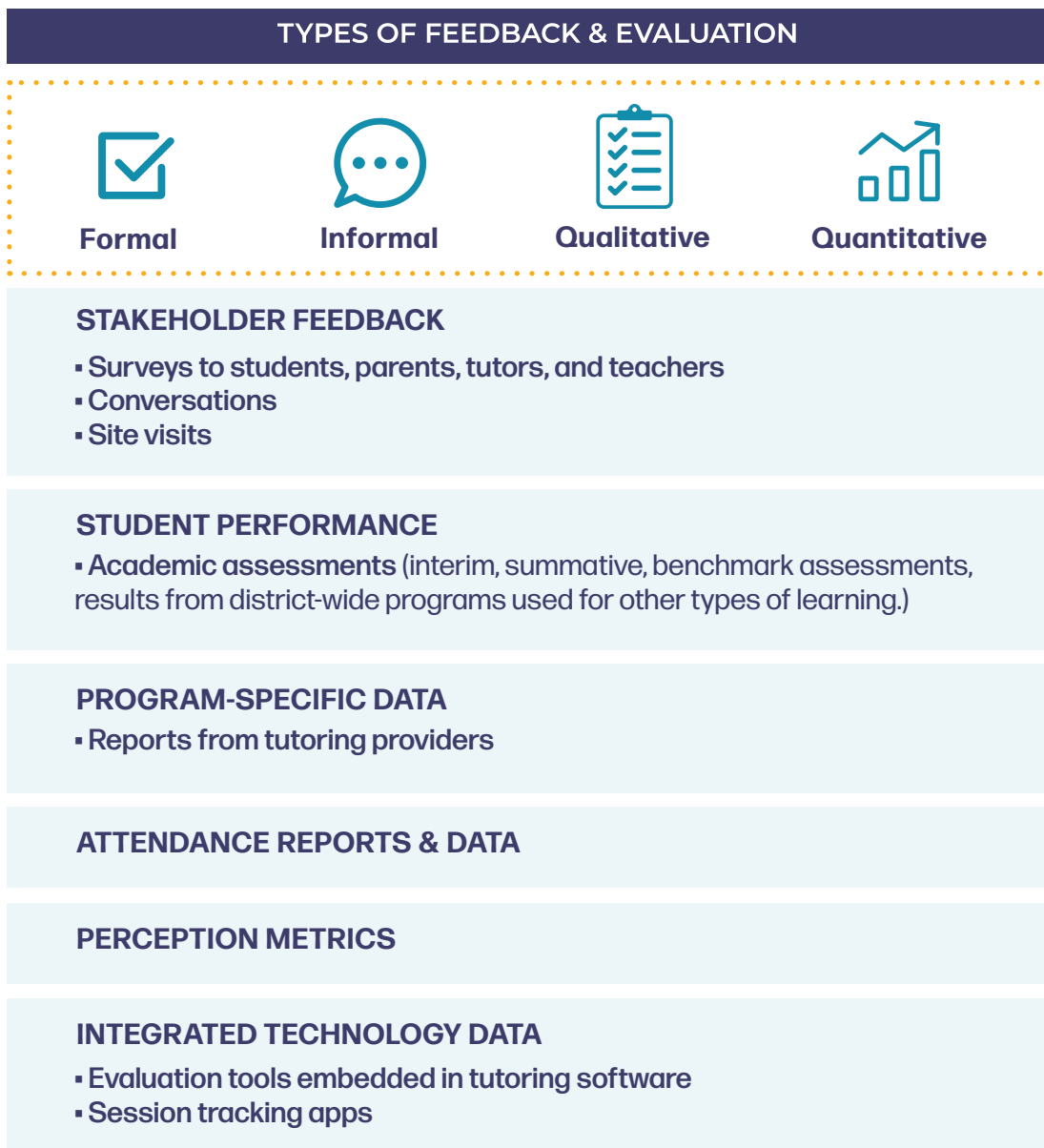
Ector County, for example, launched with an after-school tutoring model, and attendance was the salient challenge. While the district continued offering it, they tightened attendance protocols and moved as much of the middle/high school tutoring to during-school hours as possible. Clayton County, which had success with tutoring during out-of-school time, also implemented a high-dosage model during the school day through [Tutor.com](#).

⁸U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel 2021-22 and 2022-23. [Data set]. Retrieved April 10, 2023 from <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/>

Scheduling tutoring during the school day can also have social costs for students. In Denver, for example, middle and high school students struggled to engage in tutoring when they were missing out on lunch, PE, or otherwise “free” time spent with peers – “time when they’re typically social creatures,” as Thompson (Director of Extended Academic Learning) put it. Especially for high schoolers, tutoring often works better in a dedicated period that’s academic for everyone. In Ector County, an alternate approach to integrating tutoring in the school day was via a “centers” or learning stations model in the classroom.

Leverage multiple dimensions of evaluation to monitor progress.

District leaders cited many types of feedback – both formal and informal, qualitative and quantitative – as critical to monitoring progress, [evaluating program impact](#), and enabling success.



Especially early on, feedback was vital to forging a culture of iterative improvement. District leaders underlined the importance of feedback loops; in order to make mid-course corrections, leaders needed to know what to look for as interim or leading indicators. Initial program feedback was often qualitative, sometimes informal, but always valuable.

Making real-time adjustments based on feedback was at the heart of Orange County's success with peer tutoring. They regularly solicited feedback from students, student tutors, and families/ caregivers, and program leaders implemented changes accordingly, often in the moment. "We are constantly monitoring our system and outcomes, looking for ways to improve, and making those improvements immediately," Demory (District Resource Teacher) told us, praising **Jennifer Bellinger**, the district's **Minority Achievement Officer**, for her flexible but strategic approach to leadership. "She believes in having systems in place, but also supports making adjustments" based on student needs.

Many districts also surveyed students regularly. In Ector County, leadership stayed on top of attendance reports and reviews from students, teachers, and school leaders. The district even parted ways with one provider early on due to negative feedback from participants, and replaced several individual tutors based on student feedback as well. Denver sent surveys to school leaders, teachers, and students to gauge how tutoring influenced academic performance and student confidence. Similarly, Chicago gathered data on students' perceptions of their own math abilities, as measured by surveys.

Districts also used more formal assessment data for both formative and summative purposes, and leveraged measurement cycles and data reflection in timely ways. Denver, for example, used district-wide benchmark assessments and weekly assessments embedded into tutoring sessions to both course-correct on aspects of programming, and to reach a more definitive verdict on the success of the pilot. Ector County also used multiple measures to evaluate program effects. This included reports from tutoring providers based on in-session assessments; student results from Istation (an e-learning program used district-wide for reading); and, most importantly, the "conditional growth measure" from the NWEA MAP test.[†]

Baltimore conducted a granular data analysis of student performance metrics to identify which structures and programs have been most effective for students. The district will adapt its offerings accordingly as tutoring expands. **Matt Barrow, Coordinator of Academic Tutoring** in Baltimore, emphasized, "We want to ensure that we are doing everything we can to make high-dosage tutoring effective and sustainable for years to come."

[†]The NWEA MAP [conditional growth measure](#) is an external, district-selected benchmarking tool that assesses realized student growth against projected.

Districts also leveraged **integrated technology** to assess the impact of tutoring, including built-in progress monitoring tools and customized tech tools. For example, in Guilford County, the district's Research and Accountability Department worked in partnership with Brown University and the [Annenberg Institute](#) to create an app for tutors to track what subjects students are being tutored in, the length of tutoring sessions, and student performance on assessments throughout the school year.

Cherie Long, District-wide Mathematics/Science Instructional Coach in Lenoir City, also highlighted the less quantifiable outcomes of tutoring, especially her sense that many students are reaping social-emotional benefits. Through interviews with students, Long gained deeper insight into how tutoring helped provide students with key interpersonal supports.

“ This really resounded with me... He said, **when I sit in a class of 35, my voice was never heard. My voice was heard in my tutoring sessions.** And that was enough, that was enough for me. Right then, a child was heard—so I can't put a number on that, or a scaled score, or how many points he moved, but he has somebody he knows he can go talk to—who he would never have had if we hadn't done that high-dosage tutoring.”

- **Cherie Long, District-wide Mathematics/Science Instructional Coach**
Lenoir City Schools

TOP TIPS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Perhaps the best insights in these cases came from asking district leaders, “Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?” Their responses are highlighted below.



Baltimore City Public Schools

Invest in a team to manage and implement your program: Barrow (Coordinator of Academic Tutoring) underscored the importance of having multiple roles as districts grow and scale their tutoring initiatives: “This work has many layers that require careful design and strategic planning, effective resource management, and consistent and frequent support provided directly to schools that require more than one individual to manage effectively.”



Chicago Public Schools

Focus on attendance: District leadership in Chicago shared that the single most significant inhibitor of student success was inconsistent attendance at school—not just for the tutoring period, but for regular classroom instruction. Program data showed a strong correlation between regular student attendance and positive tutoring effects – a signal that other districts implementing tutoring programs should simultaneously focus on improving student attendance over time.



Clayton County Public Schools

Even in a flexible, “on-demand” model, find ways to encourage regular student engagement with the tutoring program: Though Clayton County was pleased that such a large majority of students took advantage of virtual tutoring services at some point during the year, they hoped to see more consistent usage among students in 2022-23. Clayton County enlisted school leaders and teachers in an overt effort to ensure that students who most need tutoring engage with it, likely by expanding dedicated time for tutoring during in-school hours.



Denver Public Schools

Stress to schools the importance of scheduling tutoring at the beginning of the year, as part of the master schedule: When tutoring was carefully scheduled within the school day, occurring during predictable periods each week, it worked much better for everyone involved.



Ector County Independent School District

Plan a “slow rollout”: In fall 2022, Ector County launched tutoring one campus at a time, beginning with the highest-need campuses, rather than launching in multiple simultaneously. Each school-based launch had a district-level team to support logistics and technology.

Guilford County Schools



Harness technology to track program data:

Kara Hamilton, Director of Tutoring, said, “Our tutor database is a spreadsheet with seven hundred individuals,” which makes it difficult to access, track, and analyze important data about the program. To make this information more easily accessible, the district transitioned to a database that centralizes all the program data they capture in one place.

Lenoir City Schools



If running an internal program, take it slow with planning in the beginning:

Tufts (District-wide Literacy Instructional Coach) described how, at the start of the literacy initiative in fall of 2021, “I scheduled and planned it out, all the details, October to Christmas. Then two weeks in, we found that the routine wasn’t working.” This year, she planned only an initial, four week period of tutoring sessions – after which she conducted check-ins with tutors and teachers to set an appropriate course for the next four weeks.

New York City Public Schools



Appreciate the labor intensiveness of and expense of tutoring going in:

As **Andrew Fletcher, Director of Strategic Partnerships**, remarked, “There’s such a need for that hands-on case management. You need a good number of staff to deal with all the particulars – not to mention tutors who are well-trained, whose training continues, and folks to observe, coach, and make sure the fidelity is there so we get the outcomes.”

Orange County Public Schools



Turn challenges into opportunities: Orange County was not initially prepared for the overwhelming response from students wanting to serve as peer tutors, many of whom had long been interested in mentoring and teacher preparation. District leaders explored creative ways to further utilize peer tutors, particularly as the district faces teacher shortages. Orange County even hired students who graduated to serve as college-aged tutors. “Students are eager to help,” Demory (District Resource Teacher) told us. “They just need the opportunity.”

CONCLUSION

The factors that make for a successful tutoring program are clear. The actual *doing* of it is another thing. Across districts, leaders succeeded by acting decisively, staying flexible, and iterating throughout implementation. Growing and strengthening these programs was not just about adding more tutoring hours, but also about recognizing the need for new processes and tools as programs grow.

District leaders are increasingly leveraging tutoring as a system-wide acceleration strategy. Many district leaders underlined the shift from tutoring as remediation to tutoring as learning *acceleration*. Districts intend to continue investing in tutoring programs, viewing them not as a one-off intervention, but as part of a system of wraparound support for grade-level learning.

In the process of implementing tutoring programs, almost every district found unexpected insights and opportunities. For example, the on-demand nature of Clayton County's tutoring program allowed them to track where students tended to request help, how often, and in which subjects—powerful data in itself, which provided actionable insights to inform professional development and instructional strategies.

Many district leaders spoke to the less-quantifiable benefits of tutoring, including the social-emotional benefits and learning students may gain. For students, having a dedicated person to support them and provide one-on-one attention is meaningful. The quality of student-tutor relationships, including students' ability to relate to tutors, will likely continue to have impacts beyond what is captured in standardized assessments.

Tutoring often led to many kinds of innovation. While implementing tutoring programs, districts built data dashboards, created apps for communication, designed scheduling tools, and developed innovative strategies to source, engage, and manage tutors. They formed meaningful relationships with the community and business sector, strengthened teacher support systems and family-school partnerships, and developed multidimensional ways to gather feedback and evaluate effectiveness. Deep commitment from district leadership, mission-aligned goals, and incremental iteration with a “do it and find out” mindset enabled these districts to create successful, sustainable tutoring programs.

The individual case studies contain richer detail on each district's program.

CEMD is deeply grateful to the participating districts, and invites readers to further explore and engage with the case studies:



To learn more about a large-scale tutoring program using both internal and external tutors, and serving all grades and all subjects, check out: [Baltimore City Public Schools Case Study](#)



To learn more about meaningful provider and research partnerships in a longstanding and well-studied tutoring program, check out: [Chicago Public Schools Case Study](#)



To learn more about a successful on-demand tutoring program available for all grades and all subjects, check out: [Clayton County Public Schools Case Study](#)



To learn more about OBC and a tutoring program with a core equity focus, check out: [Denver Public Schools Case Study](#)



To learn more about a tutoring program launched under time, talent, and policy constraints; and which leveraged OBC and engaged principals to participate in vendor selection, check out: [Ector County Independent School District Case Study](#)



To learn more about an internal tutoring corps with strong community connections, and scaling-up a program known for its strategic partnerships and research-based practices, check out: [Guilford County Schools Case Study](#)



To learn more about an internal program with rigorous and intentional tutor development, check out: [Lenoir City Schools Case Study](#)



To learn about strategic relationships that meet the needs of both elementary and college students, check out: [New York City Public Schools Case Study](#)



To learn more about a student-centered, peer-tutoring program focused on middle and high school math, check out: [Orange County School District Case Study](#)

● APPENDIX

CEMD Resources

- [Decision, Decisions: Navigating Tutoring Options](#)
- [Engaging Caregivers and Communities](#)
- [Features of Quality: The Seven Elements of High-Impact Tutoring](#)
- [In Real Life Webinars](#)
- [Measuring Impact](#)
- [Outcomes-Based Contracting](#)
- [Selecting Products and Services from External Tutoring Providers](#)

Recommended Resources

- Council of Chief State School Officers
 - [Road to Recovery: How States are Using Federal Relief Funding to Scale High-Impact Tutoring](#)
- National Student Support Accelerator
 - [Educator Guide: High-Impact Tutoring Advocacy](#)
 - [Funding Tutoring Programs](#)
 - [High-Impact Tutoring: District Playbook](#)
 - [Scheduling Sessions](#)
 - [Tutoring Quality Improvement System](#) - Self-Assessment Tool
- Southern Education Foundation
 - [Outcomes Based Contracting](#)

OUR REVIEWERS

CEMD thought leadership is supported and empowered by advisors who generously contribute their time, talent, and accumulated expertise. We extend our gratitude to the following reviewers, whose insights and wisdom informed the content of this report:

Cheryl Dobbertin

Director of Secondary Education,
East Irondequoit School District

Dr. Elisha Smith Arrillaga

Founder and CEO, Student Success
Solutions

Dr. Brittany Miller

Outcomes Based Contracting Director,
Southern Education Foundation

Willette Trotty-Aubrey

Program Director of Middle School
Science, Aldine Independent School
District

Alissa Peltzman

Independent Education Policy Consultant

Dr. Simone Wright

Associate Chief of Academics, Denver
Public Schools

Dr. Jennifer Shorter

Director of Quality and Improvement,
National Student Support Accelerator,
Brown University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CEMD appreciates the support and partnership from the following organizations:

