



STATE GUIDANCE FOR HIGH-IMPACT TUTORING



MAY 2021



The Education Trust





The recent passage of the [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA) is infusing America's K12 public schools with unprecedented, desperately needed relief funds to aid in the academic recovery of students in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$122 billion allocated to K12 public schools represents over seven times current annual Title I funding. As a part of these relief dollars, Congress has required that states and districts designate at least 5% and 20% of the total funding, respectively, to specifically address learning loss, totaling \$28 billion. This funding gives education leaders across the country the opportunity to make significant investments in evidence-based programs.

Not all interventions to address unfinished instruction are created equally. **We encourage states to consider carefully implementing programs with strong evidence improving students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes: high-impact tutoring.**

State Role in ARPA Use of Funds

State leaders have a particularly important role to play in ensuring that both state and district funds from ARPA are both invested in strong evidence-based interventions and targeted towards students disproportionately impacted. As the US Department of Education's [State Plan Template](#) makes clear, state education agencies (SEA) cannot simply be a passthrough for local funds.

In addition to outlining plans for state set-aside funds, SEAs must show how they plan to support districts in:

- Developing plans for how to use ARP-ESSER funds, including identifying the needs of and appropriate interventions for student groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic;
- Authentic stakeholder engagement;
- Ongoing implementation of districts plans active monitoring of district progress and providing appropriate guidance and support as needed; and
- Ensuring that equity remains at the center of all district planning and implementation.

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Effectiveness of High-Impact Tutoring

High-impact tutoring programs show clear, positive results, particularly for students in need of the most academic supports. Students participating in these programs have gained an



additional one to two years of [math](#) and an additional year of learning in [English language arts](#)—on top of what they learned in the classroom—compared to nonparticipants.

In a recent [meta-analysis](#) of 14 types of educational interventions, high-impact tutoring was found to be the most effective at improving student achievement.

Summary High-Impact Tutoring Research

Study	Average Impact (Days of Additional Learning)
2017 Meta-Analysis Comparing Interventions	216 days (Math & ELA)
2020 Meta-Analysis of Tutoring Programs	222 days (Math & ELA)
2021 Saga Education Study	96-222 days (Math)
2016 Saga Education Study	138 days (Math)
2013 MATCH Charter School Study	90-150 days (ELA)

Research-Based Program Guardrails

Successful tutoring programs share some key commonalities, which likely lead to their strong results. Based on [research](#), effective high-impact tutoring programs:

- **Occur during the school day.** Embedded programs have a significantly higher likelihood of student attendance and reaching the students who need it most.
- **Include a minimum of three sessions per week for the duration of the school year.** For tutoring approaches to be effective, students have to spend a substantial amount of time working with their tutor.
- **Occur in groups of 4 or fewer students.** Given that individualized instruction is essential to effective tutoring, the impacts of tutoring diminish substantially in groups larger than four students.
- **Provide students with a consistent tutor** who is supported by ongoing oversight and coaching. The basis of effective tutoring is strong tutor-student relationships. Students should have a consistent tutor who is skilled at relationship-building, which help develop both academic and non-academic outcomes;
- **Provide tutors with pre-service training, oversight, ongoing coaching, and clear lines of accountability.** Certified teachers, paraprofessionals, AmeriCorps members, college students, and other volunteers who receive high-quality training can all be effective tutors



- **Use data to inform tutoring sessions.** Tutors should use data to understand students' strengths and needs and should build their sessions to focus on these needs. Tutoring programs should use also data to assess their effectiveness at improving student learning and should make adjustments based on these data.
- **Use materials that are aligned with research and state standards.** The materials that tutors use with their students should be aligned with both state standards and research on teaching and learning and should be engaging for students and easy for tutors to use.

In addition to adhering to these guidelines, district and school leaders considering implementing high-impact tutoring will have to make important decisions about hiring, staffing, and training. They also will need to make decisions around grouping, scheduling, and the curriculum. With each decision, district and school leaders will have to balance what the evidence says is most effective with what is most feasible given resource constraints and local context.

Publicly Available Resources

National experts such as the [National Student Support Accelerator](#) have developed specific guidance and toolkits to help states and LEAs navigate potential implementation challenges. Tools include guidelines for articulating each aspect of a tutoring program leaders need to determine, a calculator for determining program costs, guidance on aligning tutoring curriculum to school curriculum, and key points to cover when engaging families.

Saga Education, a leading provider of high-impact tutoring, publicly released its [basic tutor training](#) May 5th. This self-paced training includes modules on growth mindset, building relationships with students, and lesson planning.

[Proven Tutoring](#), developed by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University, provides a comprehensive list of existing tutoring providers across the country with a proven research base for states and districts interested in partnering with local organizations rather than building new programs from scratch.

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States Leading on High-Impact Tutoring

Legislative Action—Colorado

A bipartisan bill to establish a statewide high-impact tutoring grant program is currently making its way through the Colorado state legislature. The bill, [HB 1234](#), aims to help accelerate student learning—particularly students from low-income families, students of color, and students in rural areas—after unprecedented disruptions to education from the COVID-19 pandemic by giving students access to personalized instruction from trained tutors during the school day.

Interested LEAs will be required to submit a proposal to the Colorado Department of Education (CDOE) explaining how their tutoring program—either homegrown or developed through a partnership with existing tutoring providers—will align with research-based components of highly-effective tutoring programs.

Given the challenges of implementation and differences in local conditions—particularly in Colorado’s many rural districts—the bill also specifies some flexibilities for districts by allowing them to modify some of the above requirements by providing rationale and outlining their alternate plans.

CDOE has committed to use a portion of newly allocated federal funds from the ARPA to support the implantation of these high-impact tutoring programs throughout the state. In order to support widespread adoption of the tutoring programs--the bill makes the grant program non-competitive, meaning any district that’s interested and meets the application requirements is eligible for funds.

States considering high impact tutoring as a way to accelerate student learning through the use of ARPA funds should consider modeling their program on Colorado’s legislation. Given that a vast majority of ARPA funds to address unfinished instruction are allocated at the LEA level, other states may want to incorporate a cost-sharing component in their version of the bill.

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SEA Initiative—Louisiana

Building on its recent push to implement high-quality curricula around the state, Louisiana has launched “[Accelerate](#),” a statewide initiative designed to provide high impact tutoring to all students. Launched in February, state guidance encourages



LEAs to provide equal access, just-in-time tutoring that's integrated into the school day, using effective teachers as tutors.

Given the many implementation challenges that large-scale tutoring programs present, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has committed to providing a number of supports to school and district leaders, as well as tutors. For instance, since incorporating tutoring sessions into the school day is one of the largest challenges schools will face in starting these programs, LDOE is launching a series of supports around staffing and scheduling including trainings, hands-on workshops, webinars, and guidance materials.

Additionally, LDOE is leveraging its strong network of leaders around the state by having Louisiana educators develop a full year's worth of tutoring curricula aligned with high-quality, widely used math and ELA curricula. These resources are being released on a rolling basis and are freely available on LDOE's website.

While Louisiana's Accelerate program shows a strong commitment to providing students with access to high-impact tutoring, some of its related [guidance](#) differs from the research-based guidelines we've highlighted above. We would suggest rather than expanding group sizes to accommodate providing all students with tutoring from a highly-effective teacher, states looking to adopt high-impact tutoring should instead expand the pool of potential tutors using paraprofessionals or recent college graduates and if necessary more narrowly target their program to students that data indicate were most academically impacted by the pandemic.

Critically, Louisiana doesn't see its Accelerate initiative as a short-term solution to address COVID-era unfinished instruction, but rather as a long-term strategy to provide all students with access to personalized instruction. As such, while the state plans to have LEAs use funds from ARPA to develop their tutoring program—LDOE's systemic approach to the Accelerate program is designed to create structures within districts that will outlast relief funding.

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