

Accelerating Student Learning with High-Impact Tutoring

The pandemic disrupted learning for many of DC's students. To help students get back on track, DC committed over \$39 million to high-impact tutoring (HIT).¹ In 2022, The Lab @ DC, the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) spoke to HIT providers and schools to understand bright spots and pain points in running tutoring programs. To learn more about HIT in DC and our research methods, visit The Lab's [website](#).

What is high-impact tutoring (HIT)?

HIT is a research-based strategy to accelerate student learning.² HIT is most impactful when it follows the evidence on:

- **Timing:** Tutoring during or immediately after school.
- **Repetition:** Tutoring at least twice a week for at least ten weeks.
- **Small Group Size:** No more than four students working with each tutor.
- **Learning Topics:** Lessons focus on building skills students need to succeed in current reading and math school-work. Tutors use quality learning materials.

Key Findings

Prior studies have identified the main features that make HIT a great strategy to accelerate student learning. Every provider and school we spoke to was working hard to carry out programs that aligned with that evidence. They were often successful but still faced challenges in matching their work to the evidence. In speaking with them, we heard five common challenges:



Challenge #1: All tutoring providers experienced challenges with tutor recruitment and retention, affecting program design and the providers' ability to deliver tutoring as planned. This limited the number of students some programs could serve and meant that tutors sometimes had to work with larger groups of students than is ideal.



Challenge #2: Developing strong relationships between schools and tutoring providers is critical for delivering evidence-informed tutoring programs; however, it was challenging for some. Without good collaboration, it is more difficult to schedule tutoring. It is also more difficult to align tutoring and classroom instruction.



Challenge #3: Most tutoring providers made curriculum decisions independently of schools, sometimes hampering alignment with classroom instruction or compatibility with diverse student needs. Providers made thoughtful curriculum choices based on the judgement and experience of their staff. However, matching tutoring curriculum to the school's was sometimes hard.



Challenge #4: While all tutoring providers served students with diverse needs, some tutoring providers faced challenges in designing programs to meet the needs of students who were most academically behind. In some cases, tutoring providers did not have enough staff to provide one-on-one attention to students they felt required individualized support. In other cases, tutors were not trained to meet more diverse student needs.



Challenge #5: Data collection, use, and reporting were time and resource intensive, but often did not yield insights on tutoring effectiveness or contribute to learning across tutoring providers and schools. Providers wanted more chances to learn from the data about how to make their programs better. They also wanted more chances to talk with and learn from other providers.

Next Steps

We developed a list of 25 recommendations to address the challenges above. OSSE and DME are using this work to continue supporting schools and tutoring providers. For example, OSSE's strategic program supports partner, CityTutor DC, created "learning communities" for providers to share best practices with each other. Our full list of [recommendations](#) is available on The Lab's website. Additional research on HIT, including an evaluation by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, is ongoing.

¹Executive Office of the Mayor. 2023. "Mayor Bowser Announces Expansion of High-Impact Tutoring Programming to Serve an Additional 2,600 DC Students."

²Andre Nickow, Andre Oreopoulos, and Vincent Quan. "The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence." July 2020.