

High-Impact Tutoring

Findings and Recommendations from Early Implementation

Summer 2023



Why is DC investing in high-impact tutoring (HIT)?

High-impact tutoring (HIT) is among the most promising strategies for learning acceleration. HIT is frequent, intensive instruction in small groups or one-on-one to help students learn. A summary of rigorous evaluations of HIT concluded that it can help students from kindergarten to 12th grade who are not on track for college and career readiness make meaningful gains in reading and math.¹

DC's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-funded HIT investments are intended to promote learning acceleration, scale equitable HIT access, and create a sustainable tutoring ecosystem. DC is investing approximately \$39 million in ARPA funding between now and fiscal year 2024 to support students' access to high-quality HIT. Local education authorities are also making significant investments in HIT using local funding and federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding.

These efforts are a response to COVID-19-related disruptions to DC students' education. The Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST) in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education made the first grants under this program in fall 2021 through the Learn24 network. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is administering subsequent grants to support HIT.

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As our students, particularly those furthest from opportunity, work to recover academically and emotionally from the impacts of the pandemic, it's critical we offer new, targeted supports that will help students get back on track. We know that providing effective, high-quality tutoring is a proven strategy that will help our students.”²

Mayor Bowser

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Our most vulnerable students have fallen even further behind their peers over the course of the pandemic. This investment will help the District accelerate learning for these students and prevent existing achievement gaps from growing.”³

*Dr. Christina Grant
State Superintendent of Education*

Rigorous evaluations of HIT programs across the US and other countries have identified common features of effective programs^{4,5,6}

Length and frequency

- 60 minutes per week (pre-K – grade 1) or 90 minutes per week (grades 2 - 12)
- 2+ sessions per week
- 10+ consecutive weeks

Tutors

- Teachers, paraprofessionals, trained volunteers, or parents
- Programs using teachers and paraprofessionals tend to yield greater impact on learning

Content and materials

- Focused on reading or math, particularly reading in early grades and math in later grades
- Aligned with students' core classroom content and grade-level standards
- Uses high-quality instructional materials
- Not remediation

Schedule

- During or immediately after school⁴
- Programs conducted during school tend to have larger impacts than those conducted after school

One-on-one or small groups

- One-on-one or small groups of no more than four students per tutor⁵

While HIT is a promising strategy, it will only serve students if it is effectively scaled

The goal of the research behind this report is to help DC Government learn about what is working and be able to make **adjustments during the ARPA grant period**, as well as to inform potential future investments with local funds. DC Government is also conducting evaluations of how access to HIT impacts learning.

For this report, we focused on understanding pain points and bright spots in early HIT implementation.

- We wanted **deep, qualitative insight from staff working directly on establishing and growing HIT programs**.
- We drew our sample to **maximize differences across providers and schools**.

This study has three learning goals that are aligned to OSSE and OST priorities for effective grant management

Understand tutoring providers' **reasons for selecting their tutoring models** and **challenges to model implementation**.

Understand how **student selection** worked at school sites and the reasons for the selection process used.

Understand tutoring providers' approach to **data collection, management, grant reporting, and sharing** with schools.

To learn more about early HIT implementation, we conducted interviews and observed tutoring delivered at schools and non-school sites.

21 **Interviews and observations** conducted between March and May 2022

6 **Tutoring sites** visited, including 5 DCPS and public charter schools and 1 non-school site

4 **Tutoring providers**, all community-based organizations (CBOs) funded by the Learn24 ARPA grant, included in our sample

At CBOs we asked to speak to:

- Staff responsible for their entire DC tutoring operation;
- Staff that manage operations at a single site;
- A tutor;
- Staff responsible for managing data and reporting.

We asked to observe:

- A tutoring session;
- Data entry for a tutoring session;
- Processes for organizing and sharing data with Learn24.

At schools we asked to speak to:

- A staff member responsible for managing the partnership with the CBO.

We added several additional interviews based on suggestions from CBOs and schools.

Details on the HIT models used by CBO tutoring providers

To encourage honest discussion and feedback, we promised participants anonymity. We've removed the names of the CBOs we spoke with.

CBO 1 provides comprehensive afterschool programming at school sites, which includes reading tutoring for 45 minutes one to three times per week. They use an online adaptive tutoring platform.

Serves 140 5th and 6th grade students across 2 schools
Ratio 4 students : 1 tutor
Tutors Volunteers

CBO 2 provides tutoring focused on reading at schools, during or after school. Tutoring is for 30 minutes two to three times per week. They use a tutor-delivered curriculum that uses books of progressive reading difficulty.

Serves 250 elementary students across 6 schools
Ratio 2 or 3 students : 1 tutor
Tutors Volunteers

CBO 3 provides math tutoring at one school during school hours. Tutoring is for 45 minutes, two times per week. They use an online, adaptive tutoring platform.

Serves 100 middle school students at 1 school
Ratio 3 students : 1 tutor
Tutors Professional staff

CBO 4 provides reading tutoring after school at two residential community centers. Tutoring is for 45 minutes, two times per week. They use two tutor-delivered curriculum that uses sequenced texts and other materials.

Serves 120 K-5th grade students across 2 residential sites
Ratio 4 students : 1 tutor
Tutors Professional staff and volunteers

Topline finding:

Tutoring providers understood the evidence-based features of high-quality HIT, but faced challenges with consistently delivering tutoring that included all features

Tutoring providers were aware of the features of effective HIT. They sought to follow the evidence on session frequency, duration, time of day, content, materials, tutor characteristics, and tutor training.

Many aspects of tutoring providers' programming aligned with the evidence. But providers faced challenging offering HIT programs that incorporated all the evidence-based features of high-quality HIT*. HIT programs deviated from the evidence for two main reasons:

- **Operational and staffing constraints caused tutoring providers to make trade-offs between program features.** Many of these constraints were anticipated and tutoring providers designed programs with them in mind. One example is providing tutoring in the evening instead of during or immediately after school because doing so worked better with tutoring providers or school schedules. Another example is limiting the time that the tutoring provider and school staff spent to align weekly tutoring and classroom instruction due to other demands for on-site coordinator, tutor, or school staff time.
- **Implementation challenges forced drift from program design, sometimes preventing tutoring providers from implementing evidence-based features in their program.** For example, tutor recruitment difficulties or tutor absences sometimes jeopardized the recommended ratios of no more than 3 students per tutor. These difficulties also kept some tutoring providers from achieving intended program scale.

*Evidence-based features of high-quality HIT programs are listed on slide 3.

We identified five findings from the pain points and bright spots identified by CBO and school staff

Learning Goal: Understand tutoring providers' reasons for selecting their models and challenges to model implementation.

Findings

- 1 All CBOs experienced challenges with tutor recruitment and retention, affecting model design and their ability to deliver tutoring as planned.
- 2 Developing strong relationships between schools and CBOs is critical for delivering evidence-informed tutoring programs, but proved challenging for some.
- 3 Most CBOs made curriculum decisions independently of schools, sometimes hampering alignment with classroom instruction or compatibility with diverse student needs.

We identified five findings from the pain points and bright spots identified by CBO and school staff (continued)

Learning Goal: Understand how **student selection** worked at school sites and the reasons for the selection process used.

Finding

4 While all CBOs served students with diverse needs, some CBOs faced challenges in designing programs to meet the needs of students who were most academically behind.

Learning Goal: Understand tutoring providers' approach to **data collection, management, grant reporting, and sharing** with schools.

Finding

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 CBOs and schools.

We have developed recommendations that identify potential priorities for DC Government to respond to the findings our study identified

The Lab, OSSE, and OST staff worked together to develop and refine these recommendations.

The recommendations are intentionally broad out of recognition that those best positioned to act on a recommendation are also best able to determine the appropriate first steps. Any DC Government measures to address challenges or expand bright spots based on these findings would benefit from input from CBOs and schools implementing HIT to ensure that planned measures meet their needs.


We assessed recommendations based on two criteria: potential for impact and feasibility. Recommendations that ranked highly on both criteria were categorized as “high priority.”


While the primary audiences for these recommendations are OSSE and other agencies directly supporting ARPA-funded HIT, they can also be used by others in the HIT ecosystem. Recommendations can be put into action through:


- **Grantmaking and guidance** related to grants;
- **Technical assistance** to CBOs and schools to design and implement HIT programming and data collection processes;
- **Interagency collaboration** across DC Government whose activities influence or could support efforts to strengthen HIT;
- **Research and evaluation** focused on building the knowledge base for expanding and strengthening HIT.

Finding 1: All tutoring providers experienced challenges with tutor recruitment and retention, affecting model design and their ability to deliver tutoring as planned

Recommendations

-  1.1 [Co-design](#) strategies for tutor recruitment and retention with current tutors and promote their use among tutoring providers

-  1.2 Identify and address pain points in the background check process to reduce delays

-  1.3 Identify and promote strategies that tutoring providers can use to attract and retain qualified tutors (e.g., increasing pay, providing in-kind benefits like transportation, opportunities to provide input to program design)

- 1.4 Identify, cultivate, and promote channels (e.g., awareness campaigns, platforms for advertising tutoring positions) for recruiting qualified tutors

- 1.5 Promote adequate tutoring provider investment in tutor training

- 1.6 Ask for evidence of a realistic plan from tutoring providers to overcome staffing challenges as part of the application process for funding

Finding 2: Developing strong relationships between schools and tutoring providers is critical for delivering evidence-informed tutoring programs, but proved challenging for some

Recommendations



- 2.1 Encourage both tutoring providers and schools to designate staff responsible for coordinating and ensuring that students are receiving appropriate HIT services

- 2.2 Support schools and tutoring providers to establish regular channels for communication and feedback by providing guidance and materials for facilitating communication (e.g., sample agenda for meetings, guidance on meeting frequency, templates for data sharing)

- 2.3 Provide guidance to tutoring providers on working with school staff to create a plan for meeting each student's social, emotional, and academic support needs


- 2.4 Support strategies for direct engagement between teachers and tutoring provider staff




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Finding 3: Most tutoring providers made curriculum decisions independently of schools, sometimes hampering alignment with classroom instruction or compatibility with diverse student needs





Recommendations

-  **3.1** Support schools in identifying tutoring providers capable of delivering HIT that meets their needs (e.g., alignment with classroom material, selected student population, scheduling)

-  **3.2** Support tutoring providers to select curricula that are aligned to the curricula and assessments used by the schools they work with; consistent with the latest research on effective reading and math instruction; easily customizable to student's needs and classroom material; and easy to implement by tutors with limited experience or training

Finding 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



Recommendations

-  4.1 Support schools and tutoring providers to strengthen their criteria for determining which students are offered HIT to ensure that students who are most behind academically are explicitly prioritized
-  4.2 Support tutoring providers to build capacity to work with students who are most behind academically through guidance and support on staffing, curriculum, learning from school staff, and opportunities to reassess how well they are serving all students
- 4.3 Conduct research to determine which student groups have the potential to benefit most from HIT
-  4.4 Strengthen communication to students and families about the availability and potential benefits of HIT
- 4.5 Identify and promote strategies to encourage attendance at HIT sessions, including helping tutoring providers and schools to set clear expectations about student attendance and measure session attendance consistently
-  4.6 Provide support to schools to manage schedules to encourage tutoring during the school day
- 4.7 Provide guidance to schools and tutoring providers on how scheduling can promote student attendance at HIT sessions

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Finding 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

Recommendations

- 5.1 Strengthen training, tools, and technical assistance to tutoring provider staff to work with schools to share data, and to define outcome measures, regularly measure them, and use them to manage programming
-  5.2 Communicate why DC Government data collection is necessary and how it will be used
- 5.3 Encourage tutoring providers to use grant funds to adequately staff data collection, management, reporting, and data sharing with schools and DC government
- 5.4 Provide guidance and support to tutoring providers to procure or adapt and integrate data systems to enable easy, accurate collection, and sharing of key HIT data
-  5.5 Foster a learning community to facilitate peer-to-peer learning about common challenges, best practices, and innovative solutions
- 5.6 Publish information on students served, program characteristics, and common challenges in DC (based on, e.g., tutoring provider submissions to DC Government)



Questions?

Contact The.Lab@dc.gov

References

1. Andre 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.
2. Executive Office of the Mayor. [“Mayor Bowser Announces Application Launch for Grant Funding as Part of the District’s \\$41 Million Investment in High-Impact Tutoring.”](#) January 21, 2022.
3. Executive Office of the Mayor. [“Mayor Bowser Announces \\$20 Million Investment in High-Impact Tutoring to Support More Than 9,000 DC Students.”](#) May 6, 2022.
4. Andre 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.
5. Carly D. Robinson, Matthew A. Kraft, Susanna Loeb, and Beth E. Schueler. EdResearch for Recovery Design Principles Series. [Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring.](#) February 2021.
6. Office of the State Superintendent of Education. [Request of Applications FY22-23-24 High-Impact Tutoring \(HIT\) Grants for Tutoring Programming, Strategic Program Supports, and Program Evaluation Services.](#) January 26, 2022.