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BEST PRACTICES FOR TUTORING PROGRAMS
a guide to quality
Best Practices for Tutoring Programs

A Guide to Quality

Saint Paul Public Schools


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Dear Colleagues,

We know that tutoring works. We also know that tutoring complements great teaching. In Saint Paul we witness this every day in our classrooms and communities. I invite you to learn from our experience in Saint Paul that tutoring implemented with best practices helps improve student achievement and success. The best tutoring practices also build skills for achievement, enhance a student’s connection to the classroom and increase student motivation. This guide sets the stage for a new standard of support for our students—the very best of tutoring programming during school and out-of-school time.

Saint Paul Public Schools has an unwavering commitment to achievement, alignment and sustainability. Our schools must focus on delivering quality education that will reach all of the students in our district, as outlined in our strategic plan Strong Schools, Strong Communities. Our goal is to reconnect students to the communities where they live—truly making schools the heart of our community.

Our champion, the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation, shares that vision and is one of many partners helping us attain our goals. The Foundation is committed to working with students in our schools for as long as it takes to help close the achievement gap, to support schools in becoming the heart of their communities, and to rally tangible investments of time and money. The Foundation exemplifies this commitment with the Tutoring Partnership for Academic Excellence™ a collaborative that aims to increase the quantity of well-trained volunteer tutors and the quality of tutoring programs serving students in Saint Paul—which has resulted in 6,500 students being tutored by over 2,000 volunteers.

For the Foundation success means tutoring implemented to the highest standards for measured results. The following guide is a shining example of the importance of setting the best possible standards for success. Working in partnership with our public school staff, researchers and community leaders, the Foundation’s Tutoring Partnership has developed and researched standards proven to increase outcomes for students.

On behalf of Saint Paul Public Schools, I am honored to endorse Best Practices for Tutoring Programs: A guide to quality. I invite you to engage with us in what we hope will be an evolving and robust conversation for continuous improvement, sharing these practices with your program, school or city.

Valeria Silva
Superintendent
Saint Paul Public Schools
Background and purpose of this guide

In 2007, at the urging of school and community leaders, the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation began to investigate the impact of tutoring on student achievement. The Foundation convened a working group of nonprofit program directors, Saint Paul Public Schools staff, an independent researcher, an AmeriCorps VISTA member and a consultant to take on this task. Our small group soon became an informal movement with community-based and school-based programs voluntarily coming together to ask and help find answers to questions around tutoring, program quality and collective impact. The Tutoring Partnership for Academic Excellence™ was born out of this voluntary group of organizations and schools working together. What started with a half dozen initial members grew to a formal partnership of over 30 community-based organizations and 40 schools serving more than 6,500 students in Saint Paul, all with the intent of providing best practice academic supports for our students.

To meet the needs of the diverse group of programs participating in the Tutoring Partnership, the Foundation has continued to hone and enrich the findings of our original literature review with ongoing research on the latest developments in tutoring pedagogy. The product of this accumulated knowledge is presented here before you.

Achievement of best practices is a process of continuous improvement. As a practical resource for programs of varying need and for staff members within all levels of an organization, this document enriches group efforts by offering guidelines that leave room for individual adaptation. The standards, indicators and strategies that follow will demand discussion; they will need to be grappled with by every organization and shaped to fit each of their equally unique needs. This process does not need to be conducted in isolation, but, in fact, can gain strength through collaboration. The Foundation has employed Best Practices for Tutoring Programs as a learning tool and defining aspect of membership within its Tutoring Partnership. Although partners vary in their progress towards best practice implementation, their united commitment to effective tutoring increases the velocity with which we can provide services at higher standards. Their participation also creates the space for a shared accountability system and learning model in which the resulting data deepens the collective impact of tutoring within a larger community.

Best Practices for Tutoring Programs presents some of the latest research-based insights into the systems and habits that cultivate the most rewarding learning environments for youth under our care. Research has shown that poorly designed programs can hinder student progress and thereby, cause greater harm to at-risk youth. Adherence to best practices is, as a result, both vitally and ethically important to our goals for helping students attain greater success.

Instructions for how to use this guide

*Best Practices for Tutoring Programs: A guide to quality* is a research-based guide for implementing and sustaining effective tutoring programs. It offers practical strategies and resources that tutoring programs can implement to create a lasting and powerful impact. Tutoring programs in any setting (school-based, community-based, faith-based, etc.) and at any level of development can use this manual to better match program delivery to the needs of students. In addition, out-of-school time programs which embed tutoring interventions into programming can use this manual to increase achievement for the students they serve.

Each of the eight best practices is outlined in the following format:

**Standard**
Stated best practice.

**Rationale**
Research-based support of the standard.

**Indicators**
Checklist for self-assessment to indicate progress toward the standard.

**Strategies**
Practical approaches to reach full implementation of the best practice standard.

**References**
Cited research that supports the rationale.

At the end of the guide, a checklist of all best practice indicators and a glossary of terms are provided to build the capacity of staff at all levels of the organization to adopt and utilize a common language around best practices for tutoring programs.

The Foundation has compiled resources, additional in-depth guides and examples to assist programs in carrying out suggested strategies. These resources are available at www.sppsfoundation.org.
# Organizational Management

**Standard**

A best practice tutoring program has clear organizational structure and management that support student success.

**Rationale**

**CLEAR PURPOSE AND MISSION**

In order to increase student achievement, a program must have clear organizational structure. Creating a clear purpose and mission statement is a necessary first step for well-defined structure, which is essential to program viability. A mission statement is derived from a focused purpose. For example, the purpose of a Saint Paul-based literacy program reads “(1) to help children who are below grade-level in reading reach their grade level no later than the end of fourth grade, and (2) to empower them to be successful in school and society.” The corresponding mission statement is “to unlock each child's potential through the foundation of reading.” Defining a focused purpose and a clear mission in this way sets the basis for intentional programming. Targeting specific goals and designing focused programming around these goals is a key factor in achieving positive student outcomes.

**PROGRAM ALIGNMENT WITH ORGANIZATION**

In addition to the mission statement, it is important to ensure that the tutoring program is clearly situated within the overall structure of the organization and aligned with its strategic goals. Programs should balance their integration within the larger organization and their differentiation from it. When aligning with the organizational mission, a program must define a distinct purpose and mission statement in order to clarify its specific function, authority and autonomy. In doing so, the program serves a unique role and avoids overlap with other organizational activities. Moreover, it is essential that tutoring programs develop a clear work plan that is aligned with...
the organization’s strategic plan. Well-developed strategic plans increase the probability that program activities will lead to the desired outcomes. Strategic planning allows organizations to outline how they will achieve their mission, goals and purpose. A successful program aligns its activities with the mission and then sets goals that best reflect the intended outcomes. A work plan is a tool that allows program leadership to manage specific projects within the context of the strategic plan by providing a framework to delegate tasks and manage accountability.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT
Research highlights the importance of staff development in providing a high-quality experience for youth. Leading experts in out-of-school time research assert that the number one way to ensure high-quality programs is to focus on staff quality through targeted recruitment, training and ongoing professional development. The Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study finds that programs that hire more educated staff members, both at the program director and direct service levels, rate significantly higher on program quality indicators. Targeted professional development is also a key factor in increasing outcomes for students. A brief from the Harvard Family Research Project contends that the best student outcomes are achieved when youth workers receive comprehensive professional development. Although there is debate about the specific skills that youth workers need to gain through professional development, the out-of-school time field has identified key areas: a strong understanding of youth development; the ability to promote positive relationships between youth; the skills to empower youth to shape their program and experience.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS
In addition to high-quality youth workers, research suggests that strong management correlates to student success while disorganized management within the tutoring program can inhibit student achievement. By strengthening the skills of management, a program will improve organizational capacity and programming. A study by the Wallace Foundation identifies key management skills that enable youth programs to provide quality services including: leadership that focuses on a results-oriented approach; the ability to benchmark and use information for continuous program improvement; and the ability to develop and implement a sustainability plan. These skills can be developed through both informal and formal professional development opportunities, such as continuing education courses, a formal degree in management, conferences, networking opportunities, management journals and books, and meetings with a professional mentor.
Indicators

- Tutoring program mission statement clearly communicates what the program aspires to accomplish.
- Tutoring program is aligned with the supporting organization’s mission.
- Programmatic activities are aligned with the organization’s strategic plan.
- Tutoring program has a yearly project-specific work plan that accurately reflects program goals, activities and responsibilities.
- The organization provides staff with opportunities for professional and skill development, as well as performance appraisals.
- The organization supports the development of management skills for program leadership.

Strategies

CLEAR PURPOSE AND MISSION

Determine the program purpose.
- Conduct a community needs assessment in collaboration with community leaders and key stakeholders to determine service gaps.
- Complete a stakeholder analysis of the program.
- Conduct an internal feasibility assessment to determine organizational capacity to fill those gaps.

Create a specific and concise mission statement that aligns with the program purpose.
- Engage staff in a collaborative process to define program mission statement.
- Present mission statement to board for final approval.
- Ensure that the program mission aligns with the organization’s mission.

Use mission statement to inform programmatic development.
- Ensure all goals and activities in work plan align with mission.

Design promotional materials that embody the tutoring program’s mission and purpose.
- Develop branding and style guidelines to create a uniform image and message.
- Create promotional materials (e.g., fliers, brochures and ads) that highlight the mission statement using these guidelines.
- Align online resources, such as website and social media, with style guidelines.

PROGRAM ALIGNMENT WITH ORGANIZATION

Align the tutoring program mission and activities with the organization’s strategic goals.
- Clearly situate the tutoring program within the overall structure of the organization.
- Create an organizational chart that accurately reflects working relationships and staff/volunteer roles.
- Outline how each department or program fits into the organization.
References

3. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
#2 Cultural Proficiency

**Standard**
A best practice tutoring program demonstrates cultural competence and strives for cultural proficiency.

**Rationale**

**DEFINITION OF CULTURAL PROFICIENCY**
Cultural proficiency is defined as a mindset or paradigm that shapes how individuals or organizations effectively work, describe, respond and plan across difference. In order to achieve this goal, a program must work to develop cultural competencies—policies, practices and behaviors that adhere to the core elements of cultural proficiency. A student’s ability to learn is dependent on the established environment of appreciation for his or her ethnic, linguistic and socioeconomic background. Therefore, culturally proficient programs demonstrate high academic achievement and experience minimal dropouts, equitable enrollment in advanced placement classes, fewer referrals to special education, and fewer discipline problems. Further, when diversity is viewed as an important resource, students and families feel valued and are more actively involved in learning.

**PRIORITIZING CULTURAL PROFICIENCY**
Cultural proficiency is an essential part of a tutoring program’s ability to deliver high-quality academic support to all student participants. Recent demographic trends reveal the exponential growth of diversity in the United States. In 2050, nearly one in five United States residents (19%) will be an immigrant, compared with one in eight (12%) in 2005. These diverse populations are reflected in urban settings across the nation. In Saint Paul, Minnesota, the student population breakdown in 2010-2011 was: 29.7% African American, 30.4% Asian-American, 24.3% Caucasian, 13.8% Latino and 1.8% American Indian. Additionally, 43% of Saint Paul Public School students spoke a language other than English at home. By prioritizing cultural proficiency, programs can...
begin to address the growing academic achievement gap that falls along racial and socioeconomic lines. In Minnesota, the achievement gap between students of color and white students is among the highest in the nation.9 As learning environments become increasingly diverse and the achievement gap persists, the need for program leadership, staff and volunteers to be culturally proficient is vital.

**SELECTION OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT STAFF AND TUTORS**

When programs select staff and tutors who demonstrate cultural competence, they are better positioned to create a culturally proficient learning environment. Staff and tutors that begin with base-level cultural competencies will be more effective with students from diverse backgrounds. The need to have culturally competent staff is also supported by the strong negative effect of institutional racism on student success. When students experience cultural isolation, it interferes with the cognitive processes involved in learning and inhibits student performance.10 Further, when students believe that academic initiatives do not reflect their culture and personal goals, they are less committed to academic achievement and demonstrate lower performance.11

**CULTURAL PROFICIENCY TRAINING**

Beyond selection criteria, it is vital that programs provide initial and ongoing cultural proficiency training. By addressing institutional racism and creating a culturally proficient educational atmosphere, programs increase performance for all students. Cultural proficiency training should extend beyond the surface level understanding of culture, such as customs and foods. Effective training helps educators understand how their own and the organization’s cultural identity are embedded into all aspects of learning, e.g., classroom organization, behavior management, instructional materials, curriculum and approaches to family engagement.12 A case study of a cultural proficiency initiative in the San Diego school district shows that a comprehensive and concerted training effort results in increased academic performance for students.13 As a center for learning and student support, it is critical that tutoring programs also engage in intentional and ongoing cultural proficiency training.
Indicators

- Tutoring program prioritizes cultural proficiency to effectively meet the diverse needs of all students.
- Tutoring program prioritizes selecting staff and tutors who are culturally competent.
- Tutoring program provides initial cultural competency training.
- Tutoring program provides ongoing training to support cultural proficiency.

Strategies

Prioritizing Cultural Proficiency

Include cultural proficiency in program work plan.
- Identify cultural competency standards to include in work plan.
- Seek staff input in the development of these standards.
- Create a timeline and process to measure progress towards standards.

Identify barriers to cultural proficiency within tutoring program.
- Form work groups within program staff to begin to identify barriers.
- Collaborate with staff to create strategies to work past these barriers.

Assess and discuss the cultural competence of staff and tutors.
- Ask all staff to take a cultural inventory assessment.
- Facilitate trainings and conversations using this tool.

Identify the cultural framework and race consciousness of staff and tutors.
- Discuss how individual and collective cultural frameworks affect interactions with students.
- Create a plan to bridge cultural differences.

Foster an environment of cultural appreciation.
- Encourage students to talk about their family, culture and aspirations.
- Create a protocol and standards for addressing potential cultural conflicts.

Selection of Culturally Competent Staff and Tutors

Recruit staff and tutors from the community where the tutoring program operates.

Use the application and interview process to gauge cultural competence of potential staff and tutors.
- Ask behavioral-based interview questions.
- Inquire about candidates’ experience working cross-culturally.
- Prioritize cultural competence in the selection criteria and hiring process.
CULTURAL PROFICIENCY TRAINING

Provide initial cultural competency training for all staff and tutors.
• Educate staff and tutors on the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of the students.
• Offer strategy-based trainings and workshops tailored to cultural competency needs.
• Practice simulations where staff and tutors react to specific situations using learned strategies.

Facilitate ongoing conversations about race.
• Deepen interracial dialogue at your program with regular meetings.
• Acknowledge and embrace the uncomfortable nature of these conversations.
• Encourage staff and tutors to discuss subjects honestly and openly.
• Engage students, teachers, and community members in conversations about race.

References

2 Ibid., 120.
3 Ibid., 15.
5 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
A best practice tutoring program implements a clear plan to recruit and manage student participants.

**RECRUITMENT: STUDENT TARGET GROUP**

It is essential for tutoring programs to determine which students the program can best serve. Students who are considered at-risk need extra support beyond classroom instruction and can benefit from tutoring. According to the National At-Risk Education Network, students are at-risk when there is a disconnect between their current situation and their needs as youth. A 2008 California study shows that many high-risk high school students could have been identified and targeted for intervention earlier. Grades, attendance, behavior and test scores during the middle grades and the late elementary years are good indicators of future achievement and are therefore reliable student criteria to determine a tutoring program’s target group. A needs assessment is an effective tool to identify which at-risk students the program should target. By mapping current programs in the community, tutoring programs will be able to minimize the duplication of services, identify service gaps and determine which at-risk youth needs are not being met. In addition, a needs assessment allows the program to more effectively match content and scheduling to participants’ needs.

**RECRUITMENT: STRATEGIC PLAN**

In order to most effectively reach the identified target group, a program must create a strategic plan for participant recruitment. When the recruitment plan is informed by the results of the needs assessment, programs are most successful in reaching their desired participants. Although at-risk students are the most difficult to recruit and retain for afterschool programs, they are...
also the youth that benefit the most. Therefore, programs should implement student recruitment strategies that are tailored to attract the at-risk youth the program intends to serve. Recruitment strategies such as flyers, announcements at schools, open house events and teacher referrals are the most common but not always the most effective. Strategies that go beyond these traditional approaches, including direct outreach to youth and families and recruitment within peer circles, are often more effective and sustainable.

MANAGEMENT: STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION
The first step in managing students well is creating an enrollment and registration plan that outlines clear expectations. An effective plan for enrollment and registration of student participants in an out-of-school time program can encourage greater student participation. By including written commitments of attendance and parent consent forms in the registration process, programs reinforce expectations of participation which contribute to long-term retention. In addition, an enrollment and registration plan can help a program determine enrollment goals, streamline and standardize the process, and appropriately maintain confidential student records.

MANAGEMENT: STUDENT ATTENDANCE
High attendance and retention of students in tutoring programs are essential to positive outcomes. Specifically, studies have found that attending out-of-school time programs consistently and frequently is linked to increased social and academic gains. Students with high levels of participation in community programs are more likely to have good grades and higher educational aspirations and expectations. Research concludes that students experience greater gains if they participate with greater frequency (more days per week) in a more sustained manner (over a number of years).

MANAGEMENT: STUDENT RETENTION
Out-of-school time research shows that retaining students in a more sustained manner leads to greater academic and social gains. Three elements are most critical to the attraction and retention of participants in out-of-school time programs: a sense of safety and community, committed program staff, and challenging, age-appropriate, and fun program activities. In programs that include both academic support and enrichment activities, retention goals for student participants will differ. A tutoring program’s primary purpose is to enable students to learn how to learn, which prepares them to become independent learners in a classroom environment. Effective tutoring is designed to develop both behavioral and cognitive learning skills that are the foundation for classroom learning. Thus, tutoring programs typically use highly intentional tutoring interventions as a short-term learning aid. While intensive tutoring interventions strive for progression into independent learning, retention goals for an out-of-school time program often aim for more long-term student participation. When this is the case and students have become capable of independent learning through intentional tutoring, they should continue to participate in the academic aspect of the program through other forms of support, such as homework help, test preparation and less intensive forms of tutoring.
Indicators

- Tutoring program has a clearly defined target group.
- Tutoring program implements a plan to recruit student participants from target group.
- Tutoring program has a standard process for enrolling or registering new students.
- Tutoring program promotes high student attendance and participation throughout the year.
- Tutoring program has a student retention plan, including specific goals for participation in tutoring program from year to year.

Strategies

RECRUITMENT: STUDENT TARGET GROUP

Determine appropriate target group(s) for tutoring program.
- Conduct a needs assessment to determine target population.
- Identify characteristics that qualify students for the program (grade, age, income, prior academic achievement, location, etc.).
- Make sure the qualifying requirements are transparent and clear.
- Ensure that the choice of target group aligns with program mission.

Prioritize at-risk youth for recruitment.
- Use grades, attendance, behavior and test scores to determine which students are at-risk.

Determine program capacity for enrollment.
- Calculate the maximum number of students based on space, staff and funding resources.
- Create a waiting list for eligible students for whom space is not available.

RECRUITMENT: STRATEGIC PLAN

Develop strategies to recruit student participants.
- Ask teachers, administrators and social workers to recommend students for the program and encourage students to participate.
- Implement direct recruitment communication such as telephone calls and home visits to referred youth and families.
- Empower current youth participants and families to recruit for the tutoring program.

MANAGEMENT: STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION

Develop a registration process for student participants.
- Determine goal for number of students enrolled annually.
- Create a student application that is accessible (hard copy, online, in multiple languages).
- Require a parent consent form that outlines student expectations, media and student data releases.
Create a system to organize student records.
- Develop a process for filing important papers and records (application, parent consent, report cards, etc.).
- Start an electronic database to track relevant student information (contact information, student achievement, attendance records, etc.).
- Make sure the system aligns with other data collection systems (tutor and intervention tracking systems).
- Align registration process with student record system.

**MANAGEMENT: STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

Create an environment that motivates students to attend regularly.
- Establish clear expectations for attendance at beginning of program year.
- Require that students and/or parents/guardians sign a written commitment.
- Create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Integrate enrichment activities in addition to academic support.
- Choose staff members with whom the students can identify and relate.
- Allow time for students to relax and hang out with friends.
- Provide incentives for consistent attendance and high achievement.
- Offer leadership roles or service-learning activities to increase teen retention.

Ensure consistent and frequent student attendance by reducing potential barriers.
- Reduce costs associated with the program (fees, transportation, supplies, etc.).
- Provide transportation assistance to and from program.
- Encourage parent involvement in order to increase likelihood of attendance.

**MANAGEMENT: STUDENT RETENTION**

Determine program goals for student retention.
- Identify specific percentage of students that program aims to retain through end of school year.
- Identify specific percentage of students that program aims to retain from current to next school year.

Ensure physical and psychological security at the program site.
- Provide safe transportation options.
- Implement strict staff and tutor screening procedures (including a multi-level background check) to ensure a safe environment for students.

Provide opportunities for student engagement beyond academic interventions.
- Engage students in activities that promote both academic and social development.
- Encourage program staff and tutors to develop meaningful connections with students beyond the academic supports.
References

7 Ibid., 80.
11 Ibid.
12 Lauver, S. C., & Little, P. M. D. (2005), 72.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
A best practice tutoring program follows a clear plan to recruit and manage tutors.

**Rationale**

**RECRUITMENT: STRATEGIC PLAN**
Recruitment is critical because it creates structure for how the organization attracts, selects and cultivates quality tutors. Recruitment is most effective when a formal plan is developed and implemented. A recruitment plan should include an annual recruitment goal with benchmarks throughout the year, along with the strategies needed to achieve these goals. Research shows that the most effective strategy to recruit volunteers is through a personal ask. Seventy-one percent of individuals asked by someone they know pursued the volunteer opportunity, while only 29% did so when not asked by a personal contact. With the increasing use of technology in the home and the workplace, internet recruitment should be a primary source of outreach. Creating clear eligibility criteria and a position description for each volunteer opportunity helps an organization recruit volunteers for specific roles and guide the creation of advertisements for potential candidates. In addition, position descriptions set high expectations for volunteer applicants, which attract more responsible and reliable individuals.

**RECRUITMENT: SCREENING PROCESS**
To establish infrastructure for tutor recruitment, it is a best practice to develop a consistent and systematic screening process. The National Research Council asserts that high-quality tutoring programs utilize comprehensive screening processes for incoming tutors. Effective screening ensures appropriate entry and placement in the organization. The screening process, which will vary depending on the program structure and target population, may include volunteer applications, interviews, background checks and reference checks. These screening practices are critical to assessing both volunteers and paid tutors.
Conducting background checks as part of the tutor screening process should be a top priority to ensure a welcoming and safe environment for children. The National Center for Victims of Crime finds that on average five percent of volunteers applying to work with nonprofit organizations have undisclosed criminal backgrounds, and this percentage ranges up to 12% for youth-serving organizations. Therefore, organizations should use national databases for background checks, as child sex offenders often move from state to state to continue to have opportunities to have contact with children. When risk is managed effectively through tutor recruitment and screening, programs can be confident that they provide a safe place for students to learn and grow.

RECRUITMENT: TUTOR SELECTION
High-quality tutors are an essential component of a best practice tutoring program. A program should identify the best tutors for its participants based on the needs of the student target groups. A review of literacy tutoring programs suggests that certified teachers are the most effective tutors. However, there is evidence that tutors with any academic background can be successful in making gains with students. Another review of literacy interventions shows that college students, paraprofessionals, licensed teachers and community volunteers can all be effective tutors. Additionally, tutors who are themselves low-achieving readers can make gains with students. A meta-analysis on cross-age tutoring shows that both tutors and students make significant academic gains and that attitudes towards school and learning positively increase for all students involved.

It is important to note that teacher education, professional experience and tutor training also make a significant impact on tutor effectiveness. When a tutor has professional training, students consistently achieve at a higher level than when tutors have little or no preparation. As a result, programs that target the lowest-achieving students should select tutors with professional experience. Programs that serve students just below proficiency can select tutors of any background as long as they provide adequate training and support. (See Best Practice 5 for additional information on tutor training.)

MANAGEMENT: TUTOR SUPERVISION
The quality of tutor supervision is another important factor for programs to consider. The presence of a certified specialist supervisor has been identified as a critical factor to program success. Tutors can achieve significant results when they are closely supervised by experienced teachers with specific content and instructional expertise. In addition to having a certified teacher or specialist facilitating the program, another key factor contributing to program success is providing continuous feedback to the tutors on their tutoring sessions. Therefore, programs should seek to hire or partner with specialists so that tutors can feel supported by a supervisor who has the expertise to offer substantive and helpful input on tutors’ work.
MANAGEMENT: TUTOR RETENTION
Retention should be a primary focus of a program that relies on paid or volunteer tutors and should begin the moment that tutors become involved with the program. Retention strategies will prevent high rates of turnover, which hinder programs from providing high-quality services over time.19 High levels of turnover can impede students’ academic progress and cause difficulties in organizational capacity; more resources become devoted to orienting, training and supervising new tutors. A number of factors influence volunteer retention, including the quality of the initial training experience, the effectiveness of volunteer management and supervision, and the level of satisfaction the volunteer feels in his or her role.20

MANAGEMENT: TUTOR RECOGNITION
Recognition plays a critical role in retaining tutors, rallying support for the program and raising awareness of tutoring work in the community. Recognition makes tutors feel valued and appreciated, which leads to greater volunteer satisfaction and higher retention rates.21 Recognition events and activities allow the program to acknowledge the efforts of tutors while connecting them to the larger cause of the organization, which helps tutors realize the impact of their work and feel part of a greater mission.

Indicators

- Tutoring program implements a tutor recruitment plan.
- Tutoring program establishes a tutor screening policy which includes background and reference checks.
- Tutoring program selects tutors who are appropriate for the student target groups.
- Tutoring program has a designated staff member who provides support, guidance and feedback to tutors.
- Tutoring program has a tutor retention plan, including specific goals for long-term involvement.
- Tutoring program intentionally recognizes tutors through activities or planned events.
Strategies

RECRUITMENT: STRATEGIC PLAN

Develop and implement a tutor recruitment plan.
• Determine target populations.
• Draft a compelling recruitment message.
• Communicate the need volunteers will address, the impact they will have, and the benefits they will receive from the experience.
• Set up a timeline for volunteer recruitment.
• Develop strategies for reaching diverse recruitment outlets.
• Publicize the tutoring opportunity through effective media outlets such as newspaper articles, online advertisements, social media and local television.
• Encourage current volunteer tutors to play a role in recruiting more volunteers.
• Create a volunteer application form which requests contact information, experience, reason for applying, availability, preferences, and references.

Create a detailed position description including roles and responsibilities.
• Identify all opportunities that the volunteers can fill.
• Outline required skills, responsibilities, minimum time commitment, confidentiality policies and information about supervision.

Build intentional and sustainable community partnerships that aid the recruitment effort.
• Identify potential partners, such as schools, faith communities and businesses.
• Formalize partnerships through a Memorandum of Agreement.
• Encourage partners to support the program with volunteers, visibility and funding.
• Communicate impact by demonstrating the return on investment of volunteer time.
• Publicly recognize partners on website, in newsletters, or at program events.

Evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment strategies.
• Collect data on recruitment efforts to measure trends (e.g., tutor demographics, referrals, media hits, etc.).
• Use findings to improve future recruitment efforts.

RECRUITMENT: SCREENING PROCESS

Establish a consistent screening process.
• Determine clear eligibility criteria for the tutoring position.
• Interview potential tutors to gauge motivation and appropriate placement.
• Ensure that position description is provided to the applicants during the screening process.
• Address frequently asked questions that tutors may be hesitant to ask.

Implement screening procedures in order to ensure a safe environment for students.
• Create a tutor screening policy.
• Conduct multi-level criminal background checks consistent with school district policy.
• Check tutor references.
RECRUITMENT: TUTOR SELECTION

Establish a consistent hiring/selection process.
• Use eligibility criteria and tutor position description to determine whether applicant is suitable.
• Create a hiring matrix to assess tutor eligibility.
• Ensure that applicant can effectively meet the needs of the program.
• Ensure that program has the capacity to support the applicant in the tutor position.
• Match applicants’ interests and availability with the opportunities available.

MANAGEMENT: TUTOR SUPERVISION

Provide ongoing tutor supervision and management.
• Hire a specialist or certified teacher to oversee tutoring program.
• Hire a volunteer coordinator to support the work of the specialist supervisor.
• Prepare a management guide to inform supervisory procedures.
• Set up policies and procedures to address problem behaviors, reassignment and termination.
• Keep a personnel file for each tutor, where relevant information is recorded and filed (e.g., application, attendance record, training log, etc.).
• Ensure regular supervisor accessibility.

Determine tutors’ needs for supervision and support.
• Communicate regularly with tutors through email, phone, or post-tutoring session check-ins.
• Establish a system for tutor feedback and evaluation to the teacher and/or tutoring coordinator.
• Schedule consistent times for feedback (e.g., one-on-one meetings with tutors, observations of tutoring sessions, etc.).

MANAGEMENT: TUTOR RETENTION

Use tutor motivation to promote retention.
• Learn about individual tutors’ motivations during screening and selection process as well as through ongoing check-ins.
• Tailor supervision and recognition to tutor needs.

Establish a tutor retention plan with strategies and retention goals.
• Set up expectations for tutor commitment (including attendance) in position description and during screening and selection process.
• Keep tutors informed of their impact and regularly communicate volunteer contributions.
• Encourage volunteer creativity and input.
• Monitor and track tutor attendance and hours.
• File hardcopies of attendance forms.
• Identify program retention goals.
• Evaluate tutor retention regularly throughout the year and annually.
Offer tutors opportunities to become involved in program and community in other ways.

- Engage tutors in program events beyond tutoring commitment (e.g., recruitment events, fundraisers, family nights, celebrations, graduations, etc.).
- Invite tutors to become involved on community boards.
- Ask tutors for their opinions and input on program issues.

MANAGEMENT: TUTOR RECOGNITION

Intentionally recognize tutors through activities and planned events.

- Make sure that recognition is both frequent and personal.
- Develop a tutor newsletter in which individual tutors can be recognized.
- Encourage students to write thank you cards.
- Honor tutors as “Tutor-of-the-Month.”
- Provide tutors with certificates to recognize their work.
- Intentionally recognize partnering programs and organizations that provide tutors.

References

3 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 5-6.
13 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 217.
A best practice tutoring program provides initial and ongoing training opportunities to build the capacity of tutors to best meet student needs.

**Rationale**

**PRIORITIZING TUTOR TRAINING**

Whether tutors are highly experienced teachers or community volunteers, a comprehensive orientation in addition to initial and ongoing training is critical to the success of the program. An evaluation by Wilder Research concludes that programs utilizing volunteer tutors can ensure program quality by requiring training prior to and throughout the tutoring experience. Volunteer tutors also need consistent feedback as a part of their on-going professional development. In sum, tutors can be successful regardless of their education level and tutoring experience when the program provides substantive initial and ongoing trainings.

**ORIENTATION**

A pre-service orientation is essential to setting tutors up for success. It helps them become familiar with the program and understand how their role fits into the overall program structure. Typically offered by the volunteer coordinator or manager, an orientation should include an overview of the program and organization, its policies and procedures, and a tour of the location in which the tutor will be working. An orientation details what the tutoring session will look like, including check-in and check-out procedures, resources and materials that will be used during the session. During the orientation, the tutors should also be introduced to the teachers or specialists who will be supervising them. An orientation is most effective when tutors are provided with a handbook, which reinforces the information presented during the orientation, addresses questions that may arise, and ensures understanding of and compliance with program policies and procedures.
INITIAL TRAINING

High-quality training for tutors is one of the key elements that contributes to the success of tutoring programs. Tutors are more likely to be effective when they receive structured, comprehensive training as well as ongoing support and feedback. It is essential for all tutoring programs to provide an initial training that covers an introduction to the curriculum and fundamental tutoring strategies and skills. Specific content of the training depends on the structure of the program and strengths of tutors. Less training is needed in highly structured programs that use step-by-step materials and emphasize basic skills, whereas more training is needed in programs that emphasize higher level activities and require tutors to use informed judgment. Effective programs tailor training to the skills and prior knowledge of the tutor and provide ongoing training to support diverse student needs.

ONGOING TRAINING

Successful programs offer training prior to and during the course of tutoring. Training topics should be shaped by the changing needs of students and also by the evolving skills of the tutors who work with them. Regular meetings between supervisors and tutors can provide the information needed to advise the frequency and content of ongoing trainings. Some possible training topics include content training in relevant subjects, tutoring strategies for different age groups, behavior management, learning disabilities, family literacy and cultural competency. It is also important to align trainings with school practices and curriculum. This will help promote consistency for students and allow for more fluid transition between learning in and out of school.

In addition to formal training sessions, workshops and group meetings are valuable ways to share information and encourage discussion and problem-solving among tutors. Regular site visits and tutoring session observations by supervisors and fellow tutors can also be helpful ways to provide feedback on skill development. Further, an effective way to support tutor skill-building is to provide easily accessible resources through the coordinator or a program resource library.
#5 Tutor Training

## Indicators

- Tutoring program prioritizes tutor training by implementing a comprehensive training plan.
- Tutoring program requires an initial program orientation for every tutor.
- Tutoring program requires initial training for every tutor.
- Tutoring program provides ongoing training and professional development opportunities for tutors.

## Strategies

### Prioritizing Tutor Training

**Design and implement an annual training calendar.**
- Assess training needs and expectations for tutors with program staff.
- Build partnerships with organizations that offer tutor training.
- Partner with school district to strengthen and align trainings.
- Schedule training times, space and trainers early in program year.
- Ensure trainings are offered regularly and accessible to all tutors.

### Orientation

**Provide a tutor orientation to every tutor.**
- Be clear about the distinction between orientation and training.
- Ensure that orientation covers basic procedures, protocols and expectations.
- Outline the program objectives, expectations, responsibilities and best practices with tutors.
- Supply an orientation handbook that highlights logistical and site-specific information.

### Initial Training

**Prepare staff members to be high-quality trainers.**
- Provide professional development opportunities to learn training and facilitating strategies.
- Invite an experienced trainer to lead a “train-the-trainer” session for staff.
- Observe tutor training to provide feedback and suggestions to trainers.

**Provide initial training for tutors.**
- Include training on content, behavior management, youth development, cultural competency and tutoring strategies.
- Create a tutor manual or handouts with basic tutoring strategies.
- Revisit description of tutoring position to define tutoring role and explicitly outline expectations.
- Align training with school curriculum.
- Employ quality instructional materials aligned with school curriculum.
- Equip tutors with the basic skills they need to effectively help students.
- Present tutors with certificate upon completion of initial training.
ONGOING TRAINING

Provide formal ongoing training opportunities for tutors.
• Identify tutor training needs by surveys, interviews, meetings, etc.
• Include program-specific materials and resources.
• Continue to employ relevant instructional materials that align with the school curriculum.

Incorporate ongoing training into communication and management strategies.
• Provide opportunities for tutors to share strategies, experiences and ideas with one another through workshops or group meetings.
• Provide opportunities for supervisors to offer feedback through tutoring session observations.
• Offer opportunities for tutors to observe other tutoring sessions.
• Regularly survey tutors to learn about areas in which training is needed.
• Send tutor tips in weekly emails or newsletters.
• Create a tutor resource library of videos, books and other training materials.

References

2 Ibid.
8 The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (1997), 90-93.
A best practice tutoring program provides high-quality tutoring interventions of sufficient duration and frequency that are aligned with classroom instruction.

**Rationale**

**DEFINITION OF TUTORING INTERVENTION**

Tutoring is defined as an intentional academic intervention. It is a best practice for programs to facilitate the most effective interventions for their student participants. Research and experimental studies point to three elements central to successful tutoring interventions: consistency, individualization and structure.

**CONSISTENCY**

Researchers agree that tutoring must be frequent and consistent. However, studies suggest a range of specific time allotments and frequencies for the interventions. One study examining the impact of dosage asserts that a minimum of one and a half to two hours per week enables constructive academic interventions and allows time for relationship building. Another study investigating the effect of frequency shows that when students attend three tutoring sessions a week, they make greater gains. The Harvard Family Research Project concludes that students who attend programs more frequently for longer periods of time experience higher academic and non-academic gains, including higher academic achievement, better long-term educational outcomes and increased self-confidence. The consistency of the tutoring relationship is also critical; a third analysis of tutoring claims that students should be tutored by the same person for at least one and a half to two hours a week for a minimum of twelve weeks.
INDIVIDUALIZATION
Secondly, intentional academic interventions should be tailored to individual students and their progress. Assessments allow programs to gauge student progress. When students are assessed regularly throughout programming, tutoring can be effectively tailored to individual needs. Tu- tors should be able to track the session-to-session progress of each student in order to modify the intervention and use the student’s academic strengths to overcome weaknesses. Successful interventions use scaffolding techniques, monitoring student progress to transition tutees from full support to independent work.

STRUCTURE AND ALIGNMENT
Finally, tutoring sessions must be well-structured and well-planned. Structured tutoring programs demonstrate greater achievement gains than unstructured programs. A study of scripted lesson plans shows that successful tutors have well-rehearsed plans for responding to students’ challenges. Additionally, when tutoring is coordinated with classroom practices, students perform better than when tutoring is unrelated to classroom instruction. However, tutoring should not be a repetition of the school day; the academic interventions should supplement classroom learning. The most promising tutoring helps a student learn how to learn, complimenting rather than replicating the school day.

POSITIVE STUDENT-TUTOR RELATIONSHIPS
The personal attention students receive from a tutor increases student engagement in the learning process and materials. Out-of-school time research shows that engagement fosters learning; students who are more engaged experience better academic outcomes. With low student-to-tutor ratios, students receive this needed personal attention and therefore remain more engaged. Researchers agree that one-on-one and small group tutoring interventions are effective ways to raise student achievement. Yet, there is no conclusive evidence on which of these student-to-tutor ratios produces the greatest gains. A review of five programs shows that one-on-one tutoring has greater impact than group instruction. However, a meta-analysis of intervention research contends that small group tutoring (3-4 students) can be as effective as one-on-one. Regardless of the ratio, personal attention and relationship development remain important factors in either setting. When a student is supported by a caring adult, the student is more motivated in school and achieves better academic outcomes.
Indicators

- Student participants attend tutoring frequently and consistently with a minimum of 90 minutes per week.
- Tutoring interventions are tailored to individual student needs and progress.
- Tutoring program provides a lesson plan or outline for each tutoring session.
- Tutoring interventions are aligned with school district curriculum.
- Tutoring program implements low student-to-tutor ratios.
- Tutoring interventions foster positive student-tutor relationships.

Strategies

**CONSISTENCY**

Develop a tutoring schedule that encourages frequent and consistent tutoring.
- Provide tutoring opportunities at a variety of times and days.
- Create incentives and recognition for regular and frequent attendance.
- Structure program to allow students to work with same tutor consistently.

Promote consistent student attendance by setting high expectations.
- Establish clear expectations for attendance at beginning of program year.
- Require that students and parents/guardians sign a written commitment.
- Provide incentives for consistent attendance and high achievement.

Promote consistent student attendance by creating a youth-friendly environment.
- Choose staff members with whom the students can identify and relate.
- Allow time for students to relax and hang out with friends.
- Integrate enrichment activities into the program to supplement the academic support.
- Create a safe and welcoming environment.

**INDIVIDUALIZATION**

Tailor the tutoring intervention to individual student needs and progress.
- Use frequent assessments to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the student.
- Train tutors to use quick, informal strategies to gauge academic needs of students.
- Create individualized scripted lesson plans for tutors based on student assessment results.
- Collaborate with school district to use standardized test scores to focus interventions.
- Provide a variety of quality, appropriately leveled learning materials and activities for students.
Create a systematic process for tutor feedback and comments that is embedded in the tutoring session.

- Provide time for tutors to give feedback to program staff on the progress of the student(s) after each session.
- Incorporate space for feedback into the lesson plan or the tutor sign-out sheet.
- Intentionally train tutors on the feedback process and its purpose.

STRUCTURE AND ALIGNMENT

Implement a lesson plan for each tutoring session.

- Create a lesson plan template that tutors can adapt to individual student needs.
- Incorporate multiple types of activities with built-in options for students.
- Provide lesson checklist and space for tutor notes throughout lesson plan.
- Use notes and checklist to inform future lesson plans.

Align tutoring interventions with district curriculum.

- Communicate with teachers and schools regularly.
- Collaborate with district administration and teachers to inform tutor training.
- Use district pacing guides to plan tutoring interventions.
- Check in with students about classroom lessons.

POSITIVE STUDENT-TUTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Create an environment conducive to positive student-tutor relationships.

- Prioritize low student-to-tutor ratios.
- Build in time for students and tutors to check in at beginning of the session.
- Have students and tutors complete a “get-to-know-me” sheet to share.
- Train tutors on personal and social support for students.
- Provide a space with limited distractions in which student and tutor feel comfortable talking and working.

Provide tutors with tools to engage students in learning.

- Encourage tutors to use the Socratic Method and guiding questions.
- Promote scaffolding approach to move students toward independent learning.
- Empower tutors to recognize various learning styles and differentiate interventions based on individual learning styles.
- Provide interactive activities, drills and games that focus on specific skills or concepts.
- Teach tutors how to check for understanding at the conclusion of each lesson.
References

Standard

A best practice tutoring program recognizes and engages families, schools, and communities as necessary partners for improving student achievement.

Rationale

COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIP

Evidence is mounting that participation in an academic support program with strong connections to youth’s families and schools yields the best gains for program participants.¹ The promotion of strong partnerships between the program and other places where students learn—schools, homes, and community institutions—is vital for student performance.² Further, studies support that comprehensive engagement of families, schools, and communities results in students with greater skills, knowledge, and confidence as well as families who are equipped with the social capital they need to help their children be successful.³

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Educational research consistently points to family involvement as a key factor for student success. Studies show that the achievement gains resulting from an involved parent equate to about $1000 in additional spending per student.⁴ An analysis of four afterschool tutoring programs identifies the outcome with the most consistent positive impact as parent participation.⁵ A 21st Century Community Learning Center program is one example of how successful family engagement enhances student performance. This program works with students’ families through English as a Second Language instruction, adult education, computer courses, and karate activities. Students whose families participated in the program were more successful in improving homework completion, school attendance, and other indicators of academic performance. This study also shows
that when family engagement is linked with learning, it fosters improved school readiness, higher student achievement, better social skills and behavior, and increased likelihood of high school graduation. Similarly, other researchers assert that parent involvement improves behavior, academic performance, and high school graduation rates.

In addition, family involvement in an academic support program encourages family involvement in school. In one study, three quarters of parents claim that the program helped them connect with their child’s teachers and that their involvement in school increased as a result of the afterschool program. Research also shows the direct effect of family engagement on test scores. A study by Johns Hopkins University Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships demonstrates when the engagement of families is focused on supporting their children’s mathematics learning at home, students improve their proficiency on standardized math tests.

**SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT**

The development of partnerships with schools is another important element of academic support programs. An evaluation of Supplemental Education Services shows that effective partnerships between schools and providers increase the quality of programs. Additionally, the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study finds that the programs that have stronger relationships with teachers and principals are more successful at improving homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior and initiative.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Finally, student learning is improved when programs engage partners within the surrounding community. Children and youth learn in many venues outside of school: afterschool programs, faith-based organizations, recreation centers, libraries, etc. When community programs with similar missions and varying expertise work together, the community is stronger. The partnerships with the most impact on student success are built on mutually beneficial relationships in which these partnering entities work together to integrate and complement their services in support of children’s learning. These connections provide a more seamless approach to learning that addresses the complex conditions and variety of environments in which children learn and grow. It is clear that a program is more effective in partnership than it is in isolation and that effective collaboration with families, schools and communities provides essential support for student learning.
Indicators

- Tutoring program is committed to partnering with families, schools, and community.
- Tutoring program communicates and engages regularly with families.
- Tutoring program communicates and engages regularly with schools.
- Tutoring program communicates and engages regularly with community partners.

Strategies

COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIP

Outline a plan for engaging with families, schools and the surrounding community.

- Include partnership development, management and recognition in the program work plan.
- Budget for the time and monetary investment of partnership work.
- Formalize agreements with families, schools and community partners.
- Provide parents/guardians with a document or agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the child and parents/guardians.
- Create a Memorandum of Agreement with school partners that includes program goals, timelines, specific roles and responsibilities as well as shared resources, space and materials.
- Create Memorandum of Agreement with community partners that includes goals, timelines, specific roles and responsibilities as well as shared resources, space and materials.
- Revisit Memorandum of Agreement regularly and assess for changes.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Create a welcoming environment that values family involvement.

- Develop parent engagement guidelines to be used by program staff.
- Train staff to be culturally competent and address assumptions about the race, class and culture of the families involved in your program.
- Provide materials in multiple languages to ensure accessibility to families.
- Celebrate parents, schools and community members who have contributed to education in newsletter, local papers and/or community events.
- Consider creating a family welcome/resource center onsite and/or on program website.

Facilitate meaningful and regular communication with families.

- Establish expectations with staff for family communication (e.g., monthly calls, home visits or weekly newsletters).
- Develop a family handbook for program participants.
- Establish a method for parents/guardians to review their children’s work on a regular basis (e.g., use folder to send student work home each week with a place for parent/guardian comments).
- Advertise times when staff members are available for parent visits and any procedures for contacting program staff outside of these times.
Involve families in decision-making processes.
• Form a parent advisory committee that is reflective of the diverse participant population.
• Identify family needs through surveys and/or focus groups.

Empower parents/guardians to support their students’ academic success.
• Host a family outreach event to provide parents with information on programming, student assessment, parent expectations, and how parents can be involved.
• Provide academic training and tools that parents can use to support their children’s learning at home including easy-to-read materials in different languages.
• Provide regular student progress reports to parents/guardians.

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Regularly communicate with schools on student academic progress and challenges.
• Create partnerships with teachers, administration and the school district.
• Establish process and timeline for exchanging student information.
• Align strategies for working with struggling students.

Communicate program information to schools.
• Provide school administration with new program information each year.
• Design communication materials specific to school partners (include mission, philosophy, and vision for connecting with school).
• Create a newsletter to update schools on program updates, events, and progress.

Engage with school staff.
• Invite teachers or administrators to meet with program staff about school curriculum.
• Host forums for school staff to facilitate program-school alignment on both academic goals and activities.
• Communicate with teachers about student-specific progress and/or challenges.

Encourage program staff involvement in school to promote program awareness.
• Join boards, committees, councils, leadership teams at the school.
• Invite school staff to learn more about tutoring program through a lunchtime or afterschool information event.

Support school outreach events.
• Connect with principals and administration about attending open houses or other outreach events.
• Encourage tutors to volunteer at school events.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Partner with programs that have similar missions to share information and resources.
• Join a community or organizational collaborative.
• Invite programs to collaborate on projects or events that engage families and community members.
Participate in community events.
- Sponsor a service project for program participants to volunteer in their community.
- Attend community or local district council meetings.
- Participate in community events (e.g., fairs, festivals, community clean-ups, etc.) to provide opportunities for the community to learn about the program.

Invite the community to participate in program events.
- Host an open house for the community to learn more about the tutoring program.
- Invite community partners to program celebrations.

Engage with local media.
- Publish an article in neighborhood newspapers.
- Reach out to district council to include information in newsletters.
- Contact local chamber of commerce to publicize program updates and volunteer opportunities.
- Use local volunteer recruitment websites to rally support for tutoring program.

References
1 Harvard Family Research Project. (2009a). Supporting student outcomes through expanded learning opportunities. Cambridge, MA: Little, P. M. D.
#8 Evaluation

Standard

A best practice tutoring program uses systematic evaluation to assess its impact on student outcomes and inform continuous improvement.

Rationale

DEFINITION OF EVALUATION

All students deserve quality academic supports, and tutoring programs can ensure that they are most effectively serving their students’ needs by conducting evaluation. Regular and systematic program evaluation is identified as one of the most effective practices related to significant student gains.¹ With evaluation, a tutoring program can measure the effectiveness of its interventions and its impact on students. Evaluation is defined as a systematic method to collect, analyze and apply information to answer questions about a program.² There are three main types of evaluation: needs assessment, process evaluation and outcome evaluation. Each of these assessments can provide the tutoring program with information on how to improve specific programmatic elements at various stages of development.³

A CULTURE OF EVALUATION

Organizations can develop an environment that values and fosters continuous improvement by building a culture of evaluation. An internal evaluation structure provides an avenue for meaningful use of evaluation findings and allows organizations to promote learning and improve organizational effectiveness.⁴ A program can build this culture by involving staff in the evaluation process, which increases the likelihood that staff will use the results to implement necessary changes. Moreover, a culture of evaluation allows an organization to be accountable and transparent to its stakeholders. Organizations can then show the community and funders that the program is
a worthwhile investment by answering critical questions about its impact on student success. Further, sharing results with the broader community better positions the program to attract collaborative partnerships, recruit participants and volunteers, and build trust with families and community members.5

Finally, a culture of evaluation recognizes how programs can build knowledge for the tutoring discipline as a whole.6 Despite the prevalence of tutoring programs, comprehensive evidence-based research on tutoring remains very limited. By investigating the impact of tutoring on student achievement, evaluation can offer evidence of the most effective methods and practices. Contributing to evidence-based research on effective academic supports programming ultimately benefits the children and youth who participate in these programs.7

EVALUATION AS AN IMPROVEMENT TOOL
Evaluation is a systematic tool that strengthens programs as they develop and grow. Evaluation allows programs to understand what works, which helps staff members focus resources on the elements of the program that most benefit students and tutors.8 If a program is unaware of its strengths and weaknesses, it may be wasting valuable time and resources. By identifying areas of weakness in program delivery, evaluation shows programs how to improve their tutoring model.9 Program evaluation also serves as a valuable tool to increase staff and tutor performance by determining where staff and volunteer members need support and additional training. Furthermore, evaluation provides staff members with the opportunity to discuss program challenges and participate in the process of finding potential solutions.10

LOGIC MODEL AND EVALUATION PLAN
In order to effectively create a culture of evaluation and utilize evaluation results for improvement, a program must implement both a logic model and an evaluation plan as key tools in its internal evaluation structure. A successful program aligns its mission and vision with programmatic activities, and then sets goals that best reflect the intended outcomes.11 A logic model provides the framework for programs to connect these essential elements by visually presenting the activities and goals of the program while highlighting the assumptions underlying the program’s theory of change. In addition, a logic model allows a tutoring program to focus its evaluation by determining the key evaluation questions. An evaluation plan is the tool that allows programs to determine how these questions will be answered and who will be responsible for specific tasks. By outlining a strategic timeline for the evaluation activities, an evaluation plan ensures alignment with staff expectations and timely completion. When a program’s evaluation plan has a long-term focus and is implemented with fidelity, it empowers an organization to use evaluation to reach its overall goals.12
Indicators

- Tutoring program promotes a culture of evaluation.
- Tutoring program uses evaluation results to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of its tutoring.
- Tutoring program has a logic model that aligns program activities with expected outcomes.
- Tutoring program uses an evaluation plan that clearly outlines how it measures student outcomes.

Strategies

A CULTURE OF EVALUATION

Create a participatory process that is grounded in the context of respective communities.

- Involve program staff and stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- Have staff and stakeholders regularly review, discuss and act on evaluation findings.
- Encourage board members and top leadership to own and act on evaluation findings.
- Identify challenges and opportunities in the community that would impact the evaluation.
- Be transparent with staff and stakeholders throughout evaluation process.
- Use evaluation as an ongoing function of management and leadership by incorporating staff assessments into the evaluation process.

Create an internal evaluation structure that translates evaluation results into action steps for program improvement.

- Train staff on how to interpret and use evaluation findings.
- Develop quality improvement teams that meet regularly to discuss results and suggest action steps.

Train staff and volunteers on evaluation and data collection.

- Intentionally train tutors on recording information about tutoring sessions.
- Explain the importance and purpose of evaluation.
- Show how the information will be used.

Train staff to use data properly and appropriately.

- Follow data privacy standards and regulations.
- Use data according to its intended application.

Develop an evaluation budget.

- Allocate specific funds to evaluation efforts.
- Include evaluation line item in grant proposals.
- Estimate about 10-15% of programming costs for evaluation.
EVALUATION AS AN IMPROVEMENT TOOL

Track student progress to determine program impact.
• Utilize standardized test data to measure student academic achievement.
• Implement regular assessments (e.g., pre- and post-testing, surveys, etc.) to track the academic progress of students.
• Track student, tutor and intervention data to use in the evaluation.

Build data collection systems that ensure accurate and consistent reporting.
• Ensure system is accessible to staff and volunteers.
• Only collect information that is relevant and useful.
• Keep the purpose and use in mind when developing collection tools and databases.
• Use an electronic document or database to record important information.
• Designate a staff member who is responsible for entering the information regularly.

Measure the implementation of program practices.
• Implement a process for gathering feedback on the quality of the program (e.g., through surveys, interviews, etc.).
• Facilitate internal or external observations of the model and its implementation.
• Use a quality assessment tool to determine where the program can improve.

Use multiple techniques and data collection tools to address evaluation questions.
• Use both qualitative and quantitative methods.
• Employ a variety of data collection techniques (e.g., surveys, focus groups, assessments, interviews, etc.).

LOGIC MODEL AND EVALUATION PLAN

Use a logic model template to connect program activities to expected outcomes.
• Ensure that program activities align with desired outcomes.
• Describe program outputs (the extent to which activities are implemented).
• Include short-term outcomes, interim outcomes and long-term outcomes.
• Determine program assumptions that link activities to desired outcomes.

Develop an evaluation plan.
• Use the program logic model as a guide for the evaluation plan.
• Decide whether to evaluate needs, processes and/or outcomes.
• Determine the central questions for the evaluation.
• Identify methods and tools needed to answer evaluation questions.
References


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid, 2.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.


Afterword and Moving Forward

When we began this journey toward best practices in 2007, our task was twofold: define the landscape of tutoring programs serving students in Saint Paul and investigate the impact of tutoring on student success. Of course, one inquiry leads to many others. If tutoring is to be an effective part of student support, what does tutoring need to look like to truly benefit students? When does tutoring work, by whom, where, how often, with what curriculum? What constitutes a good tutoring program? By what yardstick can we measure the efficacy of our efforts? What standards will determine the value of our work? Thus became the road map for the next four years.

Best Practices for Tutoring Programs strives to address these questions by posing parameters that must be considered in the quest to achieve quality. The prize at the end of this journey is improved program quality and organizational cultural. When refined, these practices are proven to foster gains in student achievement. Best Practices for Tutoring Programs can be a powerful tool in determining a program’s future direction, but a program’s stakeholders must be the decision-makers in determining the priority of best practices to address, the methods to achieve these objectives and the distribution of resources that will be necessary. This claim of ownership by community members, organizations, schools and program staff is a necessary and momentous first step in embarking upon the greater goal of better educational opportunities for youth.

The Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation has published this manual in the hopes that a deeper understanding of our collective capacity to be agents-of-change will propel the growth and maturity of tutoring programs in every stage of development. Although the process of change may be complex—requiring cooperation and commitment across organizational levels or a re-allocation of limited resources—the benefits of providing tutoring at the highest standards are beyond compare.

The invitation to embark on the journey toward best practices in tutoring is open—and this guide is your roadmap. Thank you for taking this step with us.

Karen Woodward, Ed.M.
Founding Director, Tutoring Partnership for Academic Excellence
Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation
<table>
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<th>BEST PRACTICE</th>
<th>BEST PRACTICE STANDARD</th>
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| **1. ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT** | A best practice tutoring program has clear organizational structure and management that support student success. | ☑ Tutoring program mission statement clearly communicates what the program aspires to accomplish.  
☑ Tutoring program is aligned with the supporting organization’s mission.  
☑ Programmatic activities are aligned with the organization’s strategic plan.  
☑ Tutoring program has a yearly project-specific work plan that accurately reflects program goals, activities and responsibilities.  
☑ The organization provides staff with opportunities for professional and skill development, as well as performance appraisals.  
☑ The organization supports the development of management skills for program leadership. |
| **2. CULTURAL PROFICIENCY** | A best practice tutoring program demonstrates cultural competence and strives for cultural proficiency. | ☑ Tutoring program prioritizes cultural proficiency to effectively meet the diverse needs of all students.  
☑ Tutoring program prioritizes selecting staff and tutors who are culturally competent.  
☑ Tutoring program provides initial cultural competency training.  
☑ Tutoring program provides ongoing training to support cultural proficiency. |
| **3. STUDENT RECRUITMENT & MANAGEMENT** | A best practice tutoring program implements a clear plan to recruit and manage student participants. | ☑ Tutoring program has a clearly defined target group.  
☑ Tutoring program implements a plan to recruit student participants.  
☑ Tutoring program has a standard process for enrolling or registering new students.  
☑ Tutoring program promotes high student attendance and participation throughout the year.  
☑ Tutoring program has a student retention plan, including specific goals for participation in tutoring program from year to year. |
| **4. TUTOR RECRUITMENT & MANAGEMENT** | A best practice tutoring program follows a clear plan to recruit and manage tutors. | ☑ Tutoring program implements a tutor recruitment plan.  
☑ Tutoring program establishes a tutor screening policy which includes background and reference checks.  
☑ Tutoring program selects tutors who are appropriate for the student target groups.  
☑ Tutoring program has a designated staff member who provides support, guidance and feedback to tutors.  
☑ Tutoring program has a tutor retention plan, including specific goals for long-term involvement.  
☑ The program holds tutor appreciation or recognition events. |
### Best Practice Checklist 5 - 8

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| **5. TUTOR TRAINING** | A best practice tutoring program provides initial and ongoing training opportunities to build the capacity of tutors to best meet student needs. | - Tutoring program prioritizes tutor training by implementing a comprehensive training plan.  
- Tutoring program requires an initial program orientation for every tutor.  
- Tutoring program requires initial training for every tutor.  
- Tutoring program provides ongoing training and professional development opportunities for tutors. |
| **6. TUTORING INTERVENTION** | A best practice tutoring program provides high-quality tutoring interventions of sufficient duration and frequency that are aligned with classroom instruction. | - Student participants attend tutoring frequently and consistently with a minimum of 90 minutes per week.  
- Tutoring interventions are tailored to individual student needs and progress.  
- Tutoring program provides a lesson plan or outline for each tutoring session.  
- Tutoring interventions are aligned with school district curriculum.  
- Tutoring program implements low student-tutor ratios to foster positive relationships. |
| **7. ENGAGEMENT WITH FAMILIES, SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES** | A best practice tutoring program recognizes and engages families, schools and communities as necessary partners for improving student achievement. | - Tutoring program is committed to partnering with families, schools, and community.  
- Tutoring program communicates and engages regularly with families.  
- Tutoring program communicates and engages regularly with schools.  
- Tutoring program communicates and engages regularly with community partners. |
| **8. EVALUATION** | A best practice tutoring program uses systematic evaluation to assess its impact on student outcomes and inform continuous improvement. | - Tutoring program promotes a culture of evaluation.  
- Tutoring program uses evaluation results to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of its tutoring.  
- Tutoring program has a logic model that aligns program activities with expected outcomes.  
- Tutoring program uses an evaluation plan that clearly outlines how it measures student outcomes. |
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The location of the following terms in the text is indicated after each definition.

Achievement Gap: The observed disparities in academic performance between groups of students, as defined by race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, etc. These measures of performance include standardized test scores, grade point average, in-class performance, and graduation rates.1-2 (Best Practice 2)

Assessments: Tests, surveys and observational methods that allow programs to gauge student progress. (Best Practice 6, Best Practice 7, Best Practice 8)

Assumption: Information that is taken for granted and is accepted as true. In a logic model, assumptions consist of beliefs about the program, its participants, and how the program will work. (Best Practice 8)

At-Risk: A category to describe youth whose personal circumstances and needs are not met by the services available. As a result, they are often in a position where unwanted outcomes (e.g., academic failure, disengagement, high risk behavior, etc.) are likely.3 (Best Practice 3)

Background Check: An investigation into a potential volunteer’s criminal history to be conducted as part of the tutor screening process. (Best Practice 3, Best Practice 4)

Benchmark: A standard by which something can be measured.4 Benchmarks are often used as indicators to assess progress towards a specific goal. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 4)

Cognitive Learning Skills: The ability to obtain information through experience, thought and sense and integrate new information into an individual’s existing knowledge. When a student has mastered cognitive learning skills, the student is considered an independent learner. (Best Practice 3)

Cultural Competence: The attitudes, behaviors and policies that are needed to effectively work across cultural difference.5 (Best Practice 2, Best Practice 5, Best Practice 7)

Cultural Framework: The overall system of traditions, values, and mythos attributed to a particular population. (Best Practice 2)

Cultural Isolation: A culture’s lack of participation or communication with a larger cultural system. Cultural isolation can be internally or externally imposed.6 (Best Practice 2)

Cultural Proficiency: The attitudes and beliefs that enable both individuals and organizations to respond effectively to people who differ from them. The essential elements of cultural proficiency include the abilities to assess culture, value diversity, manage dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity and to institutionalize cultural knowledge.7 (Best Practice 2)
**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Differentiated Instruction:** Instruction that changes based on a student’s individual needs, progress, interest, preferred learning style and ability. Differentiated instruction is typically used when a group of students consists of varying skill levels and learning styles. By adapting the lesson and teaching style to the needs of individual students, differentiated instruction can serve all students regardless of differences in ability. (Best Practice 6)

**Diversity:** Heterogeneity or the existence of many differences within a group. Diversity can occur across differences of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, religion, political viewpoints, or other ideologies. In education, it has been used to reflect a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural school population. (Best Practice 2)

**Enrichment Activities:** Activities that facilitate student learning in ways that differ from methods utilized during the school day. For example, activities including art, music, culture, etc. (Best Practice 3)

**Evaluation:** A systematic method to collect, analyze and apply information to answer questions about a program and its effectiveness. (Best Practice 8)

**Evaluation Plan:** An evaluation plan is a written document that states the objectives of the evaluation, the questions that will be answered, the information that will be collected to answer these questions, and when the information will be collected. (Best Practice 8)

**Evaluation Questions:** The specific questions that will be answered through a program evaluation. The questions will depend on the type of evaluation being conducted and the information the organization wants to obtain. (Best Practice 8)

**Feasibility Assessment:** A formal analysis or research into the practicality of a proposed plan, program or policy. (Best Practice 1)

**Guiding Questions:** Questions posed by the tutor that guide the learning of the student. Guiding questions are often used in conjunction with the Socratic Method. They are typically open-ended questions that lead the student to obtain specific knowledge or skills. (Best Practice 6)

**Independent Learner:** A student who has learned how to learn and takes responsibility for his or her learning both in and out of the classroom. (Best Practice 3, Best Practice 6)

**Individualization:** The act or process of modifying a lesson, session or activity to suit the needs of an individual student. A tutoring session is individualized when it addresses the observed strengths, weaknesses and progress of a specific student. (Best Practice 6)
**Glossary of Terms**

**Institutional Racism:** The manifestation of racism when prejudice is connected with the power of institutions. This results in institutions (e.g., schools, government and business) with an environment where racism persists through subtle or direct prejudice. (Best Practice 2)

**Interracial Dialogue:** An inclusive conversation across race that enables the exchange of information, perspectives and solutions to serious civic concerns. (Best Practice 2)

**Logic Model:** A logic model is a picture of how an organization does its work – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. A program’s logic model links outcomes (both short- and long-term) with program activities and the theoretical assumptions of the program. It is a systematic and visual representation of a program’s theory of change. (Best Practice 8)

**Memorandum of Agreement (MOA):** A written document that outlines the scope of association and expectations of mutual responsibilities between two or more parties. (Best Practice 4, Best Practice 7)

**Mission Statement:** A mission statement articulates the reason an organization exists. Beyond this, a mission statement may also indicate goals, priorities, values, and beliefs. (Best Practice 1)

**Needs Assessment:** A formal process which determines the gaps in community services and prioritizes these gaps, selecting the most important for resolution. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 3, Best Practice 8)

**Organizational Capacity:** The ability to formulate and achieve relevant objectives. Organizational capacity development is an ongoing process that involves strengthening both operational and adaptive capacities, including financial resources, technical expertise, training, information, political negotiation, etc. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 4)

**Organizational Culture:** An organization’s values, underlying assumptions, expectations, and definitions. (Best Practice 1)

**Organizational Structure:** The framework within which an organization’s staff and their responsibilities are arranged so that work can be performed and goals met. Organizational structure also determines the flow of information between different departments within the organization. (Best Practice 1)

**Orientation:** An introduction that familiarizes a new staff member or volunteer with the program, organization, policies and procedures. An orientation also involves a tour of the space in which the new member will be working. The orientation helps the new member understand the program’s expectations and conveys what he or she can expect from the program. (Best Practice 5)
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Outcomes: The specific changes in a program participant’s behavior, knowledge, skills, attitude and level of functioning. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 6, Best Practice 8)
- Short-term outcomes: changes attainable in one year or less.
- Interim outcomes: changes attainable in two to four years.
- Long-term: changes attainable in five or more years.

Outcome Evaluation: An outcome evaluation assesses the impact of a program by determining if the actual outcomes are aligned with the intended outcomes. This type of evaluation is typically conducted during the later stages of a program’s development. If the program is implemented with fidelity, an outcome evaluation will determine if the program and its practices are effective. An outcome evaluation may be combined with a process evaluation to determine where the program can improve its implementation. (Best Practice 8)

Out-of-School Time: Formal and informal learning opportunities that are available to children or youth outside of the scheduled school day (e.g., afterschool, weekends, and summer). (Best Practice 3, Best Practice 6)

Outputs: The direct products of program activities. These may include types, levels and targets of services delivered by the program (e.g., the number of participants served, number of tutors retained). (Best Practice 8)

Pacing Guide: A calendar, guide or schedule according to which a school district, individual school or classroom follows an established curriculum. (Best Practice 6)

Performance Appraisals: A formal assessment between an employee and supervisor that usually takes the form of a periodic interview (annual or semi-annual), in which the work performance of the employee is examined and discussed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement and skill development.14 (Best Practice 1)

Personal Ask: An outreach strategy targeting one’s personal network of contacts to request resources such as volunteer time, financial contributions and in-kind donations. (Best Practice 4)

Process Evaluation: A process evaluation assesses the delivery of a program. It verifies the specific activities of the program and whether they are being implemented as designed. This type of evaluation is typically conducted during the earlier stages of a program in order to improve its implementation. (Best Practice 8)

Professional Development: The ongoing process whereby staff develop their professional knowledge and skills through trainings, workshops or observations. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 5, Best Practice 8)
Glossary of Terms

Program Evaluation. See Evaluation.

Program Purpose: A description of what the program does, for whom, and for what outcomes or benefit. A program’s purpose is driven by audience needs and considerations, provides a solution to meet those needs, and fulfills the organization’s mission. A program’s purpose fits within the mission of the broader organization.15 (Best Practice 1)

Race Consciousness: Awareness or sensitivity to the implications of racial and ethnic identity, particularly within a larger cultural structure. The process of acquiring race consciousness starts with discovering one’s own racial identity, before extending to the understanding of others’ identities. (Best Practice 2)

Resources: Something that can be used to implement or support a program. A program has access to human, financial, organizational and community resources to direct its work. (Best Practice 1)

Retention: The process of keeping students, volunteers and staff engaged in program activities, inspiring them to keep up their participation throughout the year and into future years. (Best Practice 3, Best Practice 4)

Scaffolding: Scaffolding is a teaching technique that gauges the amount of support required from the instructor based on an individual student’s progress and current abilities to move the student to the next level of learning. Scaffolding functions like a bridge used to build upon what a student already knows to arrive at something he does not know. With this technique, the instructor or tutor provides support only for the skills that are beyond the student’s capability. The instructor encourages and pushes the student to learn new material by providing intentional support and feedback. As the student becomes more familiar with the material, the instructor gradually provides less and less assistance until the student has mastered the material on his own. (Best Practice 6)

Scripted Lesson Plans: A detailed plan of the tutoring session, including the materials, curriculum and skills to be addressed. It is a written guide that outlines the goal of the tutoring session and the timeline and activities for achieving that goal with the student. (Best Practice 6)

Service Gaps: Community needs that are not being met, but have the potential to be met through services or interventions. (Best Practice 3)
Glossary of Terms

**Socratic Method**: The Socratic Method consists of a question-oriented dialogue originally used by Socrates, the famous Greek philosopher and teacher. In tutoring, it refers to the teaching technique of posing specific, intentional questions to students in order to foster the learning of new material. By asking the right questions, tutors encourage students to use the knowledge they currently have to acquire new skills and knowledge. With continued questioning, the tutor attempts to draw out the student’s fullest possible knowledge of the topic. (Best Practice 6)

**Standardized Test Scores**: Student scores on standardized tests which inform educators whether a student is meeting specific standards or has mastered certain skills. They are often administered state-wide like the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement test, or nationally-normed tests like the Measure of Academic Progress test. Standardized test scores are frequently used to inform programming and lesson plans for individual students. (Best Practice 6, Best Practice 8)

**Stakeholder**: Individuals and groups who have a direct interest in and may be affected by the program or evaluation results. They hold a stake in the direction of the program, playing a unique role based on their interest and provisions. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 8)

**Strategic Plan**: A framework for identifying or visualizing an organization’s future direction, goals, and a map of possible routes for achieving desired objectives within five to ten years. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 3, Best Practice 4)

**Student Outcomes**: Student outcomes refer to the changes in behavior, attitude, knowledge or skills that result from a learning experience. These outcomes can be either academic (e.g., grades, test scores, etc.) or social (e.g., engagement in program activities, self-confidence, etc.). (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 8)

**Sustainability Plan**: A formal plan that identifies the resources, relationships and activities necessary to fulfill a program’s goals for long-term sustainability. (Best Practice 1)

**Target Group**: For a tutoring program, a target group is a specific subset of students within a target population, which the program aims to serve. (Best Practice 3, Best Practice 4)

**Target Population**: A group of individuals who share common identifiers determined by a program’s need assessment. (Best Practice 3, Best Practice 4)

**Theory of Change**: A program’s theory of change explicitly outlines the assumptions behind the program’s expected outcomes. It maps out how specific activities will lead to these expected outcomes. A logic model makes these assumptions visible by connecting the program’s activities and the expected outcomes. With a program evaluation, the program can then test its theory of change by evaluating the outcomes and comparing the actual to the expected outcomes. (Best Practice 8)
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Training: Instruction that brings a person to a higher level of proficiency in a subject. (Best Practice 4, Best Practice 5)

Tutor Screening: A process during which potential volunteers are evaluated for eligibility, capability and appropriate placement within a tutoring program. Methods for gauging these criteria may include initial interviews, clear and consistent expectations for volunteer positions, requests for tutor references, and multi-level background checks. (Best Practice 4)

Tutoring or Tutoring Intervention: An intentional academic intervention between a tutor and a student or small group of students.

Volunteer Management: The application of management strategies to volunteer personnel. It may encompass a wide range of activities including recruitment, coordination, ongoing training and supervision. (Best Practice 4)

Volunteer Supervision: An essential aspect of volunteer management that ensures oversight, guidance, and support for volunteers as they fulfill the responsibilities of their position. (Best Practice 4)

Work Plan: A work plan outlines in specific detail how a project will be conducted. Work plans typically include a description of the project’s objective; a list of personnel participating in the project; a list of equipment and facilities to be used; a breakdown of the project into specific tasks, indicating which are dependent on other tasks; a schedule of when each task will be started and completed, and who will be responsible for that task; and a budget. Work plans are often used to support the overall goals of a strategic plan. (Best Practice 1, Best Practice 2, Best Practice 4, Best Practice 7)

References

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