High-Quality Tutoring to Accelerate Learning:
Implementing and Improving Your Program

KATIE DRUMMOND

Today's session is being sponsored by the Regional Education Laboratory West, and as you can see the bullet points on the screen, we have several goals within the lab. First is to conduct applied research. We also provide technical support around data, including data collection, evidence use, and research. And then we also facilitate dissemination of actual research evidence. And as you can see, we're focused on the western states circled there on your screen. But there are laboratories that cover every region of the country, including the outlying areas.

Today's session is actually part of a series of webinars focused on tutoring. If you missed our September session on evidence and best practices, you can watch that recorded webinar video that will be coming and posted to our website soon. Today, we will focus on implementing and improving tutoring programs, and in November, we're going to do a deeper dive into literacy and math tutoring in particular.

We have a great set of speakers today. I'll give you a bit of background on each as we get to their respective sections. Here, you can see the agenda for the session. First, we'll hear an overview of key findings from the research on tutoring, then we'll get into details of planning and implementing tutoring through the lens of a district playbook. [Bernard McCune and Brittany Miller] from Denver Public School, who will talk about implementing tutoring in their context. And finally, we will take time for audience questions and have further discussion among our speakers. Here, you can see the goals for the webinar, and you can see that these include some exploration of specific tools that can be used [in the four] phases of developing and implementing tutoring programs. I think you'll find these really helpful and practical.

So with that, I'm going to hand it over to a couple of our speakers. First, Susanna Loeb is the Director of the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. She is a Professor of Education and of International and Public Affairs. Broadly, her research focuses on education policy and its role in improving educational opportunities for students. She is the Founding and Acting Executive Director of the National Student Support Accelerator. She'll hand things off to her colleague, Kathy Bendheim, who is an independent consultant for the Accelerator. Previously, she was Executive Director of the White House Council for Community Solutions that focused on creating opportunities for disconnected youth. Susanna?

SUSANNA LOEB

Hello. Thank you for having me here today. I'm really excited to share what we've been learning about high-impact tutoring and share considerations and tools for districts as they

design and implement high-impact tutoring. The pandemic, as many of you know, has impacted students. As you can see from the graph, across a wide range of schools—in this case, we've got something like 1,400 schools in 41 states—students have lost substantial ground relative to students in the same grade in the prior year. This reduction in learning is evidenced across grade levels and has had a particularly severe impact on low-income students and students of color. So what can we do?

Fortunately, there's a large body of evidence that supports the effectiveness of tutoring. In fact, rarely in research do we have so much evidence pointing to the promise of specific tutoring models. Researchers have performed over 150 random-controlled trials. These are systematic studies of program effects that do a really great job of isolating the true effect of the program and the true effect on student learning. These studies show positive effects of tutoring across grade levels and subject areas with effects, in most cases, ranging from half a year to more than a year of extra learning over one academic year of tutoring. Often, these results are based on studies of students who are far behind in grade level. Tutoring turns out to be a really effective way to accelerate learning for those with substantial learning needs.

Not only has tutoring been shown to be effective, it's been shown to be actually more effective than almost any other intervention that has been tested, particularly for accelerated learning. As you can see from this chart, tutoring is more effective than several other academic interventions that have been tested, and these include technology support, class size reduction, professional development, other kinds of interventions that are also, in the moment, quite costly.

Tutoring's effectiveness is, in many ways, not surprising, given that tutoring can target the specific needs of each student, and tutoring from a consistent tutor can help develop that close adult-student relationship, which can really improve students' engagement in school and then their overall well-being. In fact, tutoring is often the intervention of choice for those who can afford it. About $42 billion was spent on tutoring in the US last year—that number comes from last year in tutoring. And that benefitted many students, but certainly increased inequalities and access to educational opportunities, since in many cases, this is parents buying tutoring for their students.

In addition to the clear benefits for students, tutoring can also benefit the tutors and the teacher pipeline. Tutoring can be an onramp to the teaching profession, creating hands-on experience to help tutors understand whether teaching is a good fit for them as a career. In addition, if tutors are recruited from the local community or the local college, tutoring as a pipeline provides an opportunity for the teacher workforce to more closely reflect the students being served. While tutoring has shown impressive results across a range of schools and students, implementing tutoring takes work.

The biggest barriers in the past have tended to be scheduling tutoring into already existing school schedules, funding, and also having enough information to make it easy for districts to adopt tutoring of quality. However, we're finding through our work with districts who are implementing high-impact tutoring that we have a window of opportunity right now. With schools already disrupted and focused on solutions, school leaders are searching for and considering options that they might not have considered in the past. As example, they're more likely to be able to adopt school schedules than they might have been in prior years.

Funding is also far easier, at least for the next few years. A portion of the COVID relief funding in ARPA must be spent to address learning loss with evidence-based interventions, and tutoring is clearly an evidence-based practice, so new funding is available for it. Finally, recent research has allowed us to better understand what drives impact in tutoring, so we have a much clearer understanding of best practices and are working towards tools and capacity to scale tutoring with quality. We have a better sense of the infrastructure and policy needs that we need to ensure quality. This may be the best opportunity that we'll have to get this proven intervention built into schools in the long run so that we can provide all students in need with high-impact tutoring to supplement their classroom work and as part of core instruction.

However, as we know, people define tutoring in many ways, and not all of these approaches are effective. In fact, during the No Child Left Behind era, parents whose children were in schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress for two or more years were able to sign their children up for tutoring outside of school. So we've had some experience with expanding tutoring. This one may sound like a good idea, but it really was not particularly effective or equitable. Only 23% of eligible students participated at all, and it had very little impact on average, even for those students.

However, tutoring demonstrated some positive outcomes, even during NCLB, and those effects tended to be in places with minimum dosage requirements, more structured tutoring sessions, and stronger coordination with schools. Not all tutoring is effective, but evidence does point to several critical elements for effective tutoring, and that's what we're calling high-impact tutoring.

So what is high-impact tutoring? We can take all of the elements of programs that have been shown to have positive effects and create a framework for high-impact tutoring, so, which programs were effective, and overall, what did they look like? In particular, seven elements appear to be critical. The first three are the foundational elements of equity, safety, and cohesion. These are just basic parts of a good program. They support four model-specific elements related to the tutor, to instruction, to learning integration, and to data use. And I'll go into each of these in a bit of detail.

First, the program must be grounded in equity. This means ensuring that students who need it the most have access to it, and it means that tutors lead sessions with equity at the center of their instruction. Both of these elements of equity are really important. Second, the program must ensure student safety. This is just a base requirement. This means designing a tutoring program in which students and their information are safe and protected. A final foundational element is cohesion. Good programs have effective leaders who make sure all their elements and internal systems work together cohesively towards their program's goals.

As I mentioned, these foundational elements support four model-specific elements, the first of which is the tutor. Effective programs place a high priority on developing strong tutor-student relationships, which requires having a consistent tutor who not only has command of appropriate content knowledge, but just as importantly, is skilled at engaging students and developing positive relationships. Good programs provide pre-service training and ongoing coaching for tutors, and this can help them as they are tutors in order to develop those relationships and provide the tutoring that's necessary. This said, a wide range of people can become effective tutors. While certified teachers have proven to be effective tutors, paraprofessionals and others can also be effective tutors. So high-impact tutoring programs

have strong tutors who have received initial training, and have ongoing coaching and evaluation, and can come from a range of places.

The next model-specific element is instruction. High-impact tutoring requires special attention to the amount of instruction and to the instructional materials. Evidence shows us that to be high impact, students need to see their tutors at least three times per week for at least a semester, and better yet, for a full school year. The quality of instruction, of course, is important as well. Most teachers need quality instructional materials. In the best-case scenario, the school is using high-quality materials that the tutor can use and build off of. However, if the school's curricular materials are not particularly strong, or the school doesn't have time to fully engage with tutors, a high-impact tutoring program will supplement the classroom materials with other high-quality materials that are aligned to state standards.

We've had tutors and instruction. Now, in terms of learning integration, programs that are embedded in the school day or are directly before or after school are particularly effective. This can be tricky, as it's important not to replace core instruction, but to supplement it. However, this integration with schools is important because these programs have much higher attendance rates. And importantly for equity, they're able to reach the students who need tutoring the most.

Finally, the fourth and last model-specific element of high-impact tutoring is data. High-impact programs use data to understand students' learning needs and to track their progress. One of the benefits of tutoring is that it can actually work on what students need help with. And so, data is necessary for it. These data can come from the school, or from the teacher, or the program can do their own formative assessments to track progress and design tutoring sessions to meet the needs of individual students. Regardless of the source of data, what's important is the use of data to tailor instruction for students.

High-impact tutoring programs also use data regularly to track overall program progress and to identify trends or areas of improvement, but it's particularly important for understanding student needs. We do understand what makes high-impact tutoring effective. In response to this, we've developed the National Student Support Accelerator to support districts and states to develop high-impact tutoring programs with quality. This is housed at the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, which I direct. The Accelerator envisions a time when every student in need has access to an effective tutor, who champions and ensures their learning and success. We hope to reach this vision of access to high-impact tutors through three related strands of work. We don't actually do any tutoring where we are.

The first is to facilitate implementation by providing tools and technical assistance for districts and tutoring providers to launch and grow high-impact tutoring programs. The second is to catalyze the field of tutoring through communities of practice, research, and about a dozen pilot sites across the country. From the research, and communities of practice, and the work going on in the pilot sites, we get the information to develop these tools and technical assistance in order to scale. And finally, we work by engaging and activating stakeholders, which is part of what we're trying to do today.

Our website, StudentSupportAccelerator.org, has a variety of tools, including a toolkit for creating high-impact tutoring programs or improving existing programs. It can take you step-by-step through the process, including identifying needs all the way to sample letters to send to parents and job descriptions. We also have a database of existing tutoring programs. If you're a

district looking for tutoring programs to partner with, you can select on subject matter, grade level, part of the country, and find a program. We also recently launched our tutor quality improvement system, which allows tutoring programs to quickly assess their program against a set of research-based quality standards, and then it provides detailed recommendations for how to improve the program's quality.

If you're like me and love research, we also have a review of all the research on tutoring to date and access to all the studies that have been done so far. Another tool, our district playbook, is what we'd like to focus on today. And as you'll see, this research walks a district through launching a high-impact tutoring program and is filled with examples, templates, and checklists to make it as easy as possible. Now, I'd like to introduce my colleague, Kathy Bendheim, who's been working with me to develop the accelerator, and she's going to share more about the district playbook. Kathy?

KATHY BENDHEIM

Yes, thank you, Susanna. As you mentioned, we do know what drives outcomes in tutoring, however, it is tricky to implement. And given the overwhelming amount of change districts and schools continue to manage, we've tried to design the playbook in a way to make it as easy as possible to adopt tutoring with quality. We started with the research that Susanna shared and worked with Blue Engine, an education nonprofit with a history of successful high-impact tutoring, and interviewed a range of tutoring organizations and districts across the country to create the playbook.

As you can see, we've divided the process into four stages, but just to be very clear, it is much messier than the graphic looks, and there will be much overlap between the stages. In general, the stages that any district will go through in adopting a high-impact tutoring program include laying the foundation, planning for operations, designing for impact in your particular context, and implementing the program. And we'll dig into each stage a bit more on the following slides.

To lay the foundation for a successful high-impact tutoring program, there are several key activities. First of all, an inclusive task force that sets the stage for longer-term stakeholder engagement is really critical. For this type of tutoring in particular to be successful, you need the input and buy-in from a range of folks including educators, administrators, school leaders, and when possible, caregivers and students as well. The trick is to balance the need for the input and buy-in with using time efficiently. So having a clear task force leader and clear goals will be important to achieve that balance. The playbook includes a checklist of potential members, description of characteristics for a strong task force leader, as well as sample goals.

Another important early task is to determine the focus area for the tutoring program. All districts would like to be able to provide tutoring for all students every semester. However, in most cases, resource limitations require that tutoring programs focus. We believe it is important to use student data alongside an understanding of existing supports to identify your focus area. In our work, we have seen districts focus on early literacy and middle-grades math, such as algebra 1, as these are gatekeeping skills for students, and we've also seen a focus on transitional grades, such as those moving into middle school or those moving into high school. And we've also seen some tutoring programs that focus on multi-language learners.

Program scale is also an important early decision. The key here is that while we want to reach as many students as possible, following what research says drives quality is essential. Because

so much of the impact, we believe, is driven by the consistent relationship with the tutor, this is not a program that can be diluted and still remain successful. So you can maximize the number of students, but only within the parameters of a program that maintains dosage, tutor consistency, and other research-backed best practices. And, of course, it is important to clearly lay out your specific goals for the program in this early stage.

And next, we're going to share a couple of slides that are examples from the playbook. First, just as a context-setting piece, there are three general goal types to consider. Of course, the primary goal is around academic growth, but setting goals for the student's experience and the stakeholder's satisfaction is also important.

Here is an excerpt from the playbook. As you can see, for each goal, we share an explanation along with examples of metrics and a set of reflection questions to help you consider your local context as you develop your program schools. For example, for the academic growth goals, it's important to consider how to integrate the academic goals for the tutoring program into existing metrics and systems at your school or your district rather than creating a new set of metrics and systems.

And for the student experience goals, we have seen districts set goals around increased self-efficacy or sense of belonging. You can see there are a number of different goals that are examples there that you can choose from or create your own, depending on your own context. And for stakeholder satisfaction, we have seen districts set goals around student and caregiver satisfaction along with the other stakeholders that are involved in the process.

The playbook also includes some specific examples of how districts are setting tutoring goals to make it easier for districts to visualize what their goals might look like. For example, in Dallas, they specifically align their tutoring academic goals with their existing math assessments, as these assessments are three times per year, which allows for frequent progress monitoring. In Providence, they use standardized test scores and student pass rates to set and monitor progress toward the academic goals, and they also include student surveys to track student perceptions of their learning. So those are just some examples of what the playbook looks like when you go online.

The second stage of the playbook is planning for operations. Planning for operations also includes, as you can imagine, a number of critical steps. Developing and sharing a reasonable timeline is always important in a large project like this to keep everyone on track. We have a checklist in the playbook of activities. Each activity has a description and a range of the time it requires to help guide you in developing your own timeline.

And you may also want to consider conducting a pilot. Many districts conduct a pilot first to better understand how the program might work and make adjustments prior to rolling it out on a broader basis. And the playbook also includes several planning templates to support developing a pilot. A budget, as we all know, is very important. And it's important to not only understand what incremental costs, but to assess the efforts of existing staff members and include those. And we include a budget template, which I'll show you in a minute.

And, of course, the question of funding is top of mind always. While this is a unique moment where funding for tutoring is available through the American Rescue Plan, we are encouraging districts to think proactively about how they might continue funding for their tutoring program after 2023. As we know, academic achievement gaps existed way before the pandemic, and

high-impact tutoring is particularly effective at accelerating student learning. Therefore, at the Accelerator, we believe that high-impact tutoring should be built into the education system for the long run. We encourage districts to think about what information and what additional resources you may need in the future to continue your tutoring program after the ARP funding is spent.

For example, prior to the pandemic, Chicago launched a high-impact tutoring program. The way they organized their funding is that philanthropy funded the tutoring in the beginning, and then slowly, over several years, decreased their support, which provided Chicago public schools the time to collect and show the evidence of the program's effectiveness. And that helped them justify funding the program from other sources when the philanthropy funding was over. It'll be important, also, to continue engagement activities across all stakeholders through this and every stage. The playbook includes the rationale and best practices for engaging each stakeholder group—from students, teachers, and tutors, to labor unions and district leadership.

As an example, from this particular stage here is a budget template from the playbook. And just to give you additional information, the playbook also has a companion workbook that has downloadable templates and additional references to additional resources. As you can see, it's pretty detailed, and it includes a whole bunch of categories of expenses to help remind you of all the different pieces of the costs to include, everything from the clear cost buckets of provider fees, to managing, to include the additional effort of existing staff and technology expenditures.

Now that we've laid the foundation, and we've planned for the effective operations in stages one and two, it's time to actually design the tutoring program. One of the biggest decisions to make is whether your district has the capacity to grow your own tutoring program, or whether you should partner with a tutoring provider. Growing your own program has many advantages. It creates more buy-in internally and more deeply embeds the program into your school operations. However, partnering also offers advantages. An existing provider will likely be able to get started with less time and effort on the part of the district and will already have trained tutors and systems in place. As well, the tricky hiring, coaching, and if necessary, reduction of tutoring staff over time all take place within the tutoring provider, shielding the district from those responsibilities.

The playbook has a section for each of these two options. If you decide to partner with a provider, there are tools that support how to select and contract with a tutoring provider as well as how to work with the tutoring provider to adapt their model to your local context. If you decide to grow your own program, the playbook offers guidance on how to design your tutoring program aligned with research-based best practices as well as how to recruit and train tutors. And the playbook links to the Accelerator's toolkit, which Susanna mentioned earlier. The toolkit for tutoring programs provides templates and examples for everything from job descriptions, to pre-service training, data collection tools. It also has links in there to training programs that exist, such as the Saga Coach. And I think it's in the chat.

Regardless of your choice, whether you decide to partner or decide to grow your own, there are two really critical systems to build in as you go. One is a data collection process that makes it easy for the tutors and educators to share the student information as well as to track progress for students, as well as the overall goals of the program, as well a system for continuous improvement, so a means of using that data regularly, and reviewing it and

adapting your program to improve those outcomes. And as always, you will notice a theme here: it continues to be critical to engage those stakeholders at each stage.

Here are some examples from this particular stage. What you're looking at right now is a decision tree to help a district understand whether they have the capacity to grow their own program. It lists out specific areas in which you need capacity, or you need to secure additional capacity by partnering, that are required to be able to build your own program. And it's meant to be simple to work through so that you can, at the end of thinking through these reflective questions, you can have a good sense of whether you're in a good position to start your own program.

There's also a tool for those who choose to partner with a tutoring provider. And it's broken into several sections, and they're in priority order so that you can go through, and if a particular provider option doesn't make it through the first screen, then you don't even have to go through the following screens. But the first section covers the high-priority areas, such as whether the provider has the ability to meet the scale of the program you're envisioning, and is it at a cost that you can afford, as well, whether the provider can meet your district's local and state requirements.

The next section of the selecting a provider tool guides a district through understanding the efficacy of the tutoring provider, either through research studies, which some tutoring providers have—great research studies—or if they don't have a research study that supports their efficacy, there's also included a list of specific program elements to look for that are based on the research and the framework that Susanna described earlier.

The third section of the selecting a provider tool provides guidance for understanding how aligned a tutoring provider is with your district's operations. This will allow you to understand not as much whether you should or shouldn't partner with a particular tutoring provider, but how complex and how much adaptation might be required for you to work with a particular provider. Things such as, do the provider's instructional strategies and approach align with yours? How easy or difficult will it be to integrate the provider's assessment system and technology platform? Those are some of the things in the third section.

And then the final section of this tool focuses more on logistics. It aims, again, to help you understand the complexity of partnering with a particular provider, including how easy will it be for your district to meet the needs of the tutoring provider. Logistics such as how much physical space do they need, what kind of scheduling do they need to provide their tutors at the right time, etc.

That's an overview of the first three stages with a little window into some of the tools. And now, I'll turn it back over to Susanna for the final stage, implementation.

SUSANNA LOEB

Thanks, Kathy. Kathy's covered three of the four stages in the district playbook: laying the foundation for your high-impact tutoring program, planning for effective operations, and designing for impact. The last stage, which you definitely don't want to forget, is actual implementation—providing high-impact tutoring for students. In order to implement, you need to select the specific students who will participate. This selection should be based on the goals of the tutoring program, and it should be informed by data on student needs. Having a clear policy for which student should get tutoring will make it a lot easier to implement the tutoring

effectively in schools. Once you know which students need tutoring, you also need to schedule tutoring into the school day for these students. This scheduling can be one of the biggest challenges in some districts, and I'll talk a little bit more about scheduling in a minute.

In addition to scheduling, you'll need to positively communicate the program to students and their caregivers. It's important to do this in a way that mitigates stigma and builds positive relationships for the students with the tutoring program and with the tutor. The playbook provides links to the tutoring toolkit, as Kathy mentioned, which includes sample communications for a range of stakeholders, including students and caregivers. Executing the tutoring program is the exciting part. You'll want to collect data to track student progress and for continuous improvement.

Stakeholder engagement will also continue to be important. You can share updates and success stories to sustain and even build support for the program. In the playbook, we include best practices and tools, both for boosting engagement and for integrating continuous improvement into your processes.

As I mentioned, scheduling can be a challenge, as tutoring is meant to be supplemental to classroom work, not to replace core instruction, and it requires a minimum of three times per week for a good amount of time, a full class. Younger kids, maybe 30 minutes. Older kids, 45 minutes. In the playbook, we identify some best practices, such as building it into the school day so that you can reach the students who need it the most, and also doing what you can to schedule in ways that minimizes any stigma associated with participation.

We also provide some approaches to avoid. For example, try not to pull students out of lunch or out of core classes. These are basic, logical things not to do. But it's good to have it in one place because then, as things are going along, you can really see it, and it makes it much easier. The playbook also gives concrete examples of scheduling approaches that we've seen work in districts, such as using intervention periods or some elective time for tutoring. We provide a description of what some districts have done along with the pros and cons of each approach. This example discusses using extension blocks to provide tutoring.

Here's an example schedule showing how this school used flex time to provide tutoring. We'll have things like this in the playbook. That completes the four stages of designing and implementing a high-impact tutoring program. Just one more time—laying the foundations, planning for effective operations, designing for impact, and implementing. We would like to highlight just a few more tools that are coming. A tutoring efforts tracker will be available in the next few weeks on our website, and that provides summaries of tutoring legislation around the country as well as policies that state governments are doing and other efforts being considered or implemented across different states so that you can see what the whole national context looks like.

We're also putting in a validated version of our tutoring quality improvement system. So TQIS, right now, you can go on and get self-evaluation, but we're putting in a validated one where someone will really look at the program and then give a rating as well as feedback, which tutoring programs can bring to districts to show that they have gone through this. We're also developing a suite of tools specific to early literacy that will include tutor training, materials, videos, and additional resources.

So that's kind of a summary of what we've been doing. Thank you so much for allowing us to share the research and some of the guidance for high-impact tutoring. We've covered a lot just now, but the exciting part is coming up where we can hear from Denver, as they've been designing and implementing their high-impact tutoring program. So I'd like to turn it over now.

KATIE DRUMMOND

Yes, great. Thank you. Speaking of Denver, we're excited to hear some of their lessons learned. We'll hear from three different staff from the district. First, Brittany Miller is leading a newly formed, expanded academic learning department, and in this role, she's responsible for developing a coherent strategy for supporting students academically beyond the typical instructional day. We'll also hear from Bernard McCune, who serves as Associate Chief of the Academics Division in Denver. Previously, he worked for Chicago Public Schools, and also Oakland Unified School District, where he led college and career initiatives. Then, we'll hear from Kayla Grayson, who is a principal at Florida Pitt Waller School. This school in Denver serves approximately 800 students ranging from 3-year-old pre-K up to 8th grade. It's a Title I school with approximately 42% English learner population, and that includes 14 different languages spoken by students.

The way we'll structure Denver's reflections is have them think about the four stages. As we heard from Kathy, we know these are not perfectly discrete, linear phases. But roughly speaking, we'll ask Denver to look at each stage and give us information on how they thought through planning and implementing tutoring in their context, and they can mention any successes or challenges and lessons learned along the way. So, Brittany, I'll hand it off to you, and you can talk about laying the foundation.

BRITTANY MILLER

Great, thanks so much, Katie. Can you hear me OK? Yeah? OK, great. So I'm Brittany Miller. I'm the Senior Director of Expanded Academic Learning here in DPS. That is a newly formed team, as Katie just mentioned. In terms of what has been going well, the challenges, and the opportunities that we've had, I am six weeks into fully taking on this work. I was involved in the work in my previous role, but I'm now just leading it. So a lot of these are challenges and opportunities that we're still kind of uncovering and working through as we launch this here in Denver. With that, as Katie mentioned, I'm in charge of creating that coherent strategy for expanding learning time beyond the school day. Just wanted to name that the grade-level coaching and tutoring work, which is how we refer to that high-impact tutoring here in Denver, is one of three bodies of work for my team. The other two are expanded learning time during the summer and expanded learning time before and after school. And the connection between how all these programs function within the school day, as you heard from the research around grade-level coaching and tutoring, is a really important part of our model.

Right now, we do have two different models going that Susanna and Kathy talked about from the playbook. One is a homegrown model. That is our teacher-led grade-level coaching and tutoring, where teachers in grades K through 5 are able to offer tutoring to students before or after school. We also have a larger program going right now in grades 4 through 12 with an external vendor that's providing virtual tutoring to our students, so that's kind of more at that contracted level.

So how did we arrive at this model for tutoring here in Denver? We started with that task force back in the spring through what we were calling design groups at the time. Those design groups

were focused on the major strategies we'd decided upon for the year based on the research that was coming out of all of our major think tanks when we were given that gift from the ESSER funds that were now put into good use. One of those design groups was specifically focused on grade-level coaching and tutoring, and that design group was made up of central district staff along with DPS teachers and leaders so that we could really design alongside our stakeholders to determine the program model.

Over six sessions, design groups developed recommendations for how to structure the program here in Denver. Pulling from the research, we designed a model that, again, is one to four students, following some of the research that you heard earlier, a minimum of three to five times per week that is aligned with district-supported curriculum in both cases. It can occur either before or after school or during the school day. We find that when schools are able to schedule it in, that really is the most effective model. And not all schools can do that, and we don't want that to be a barrier to entry. We also have not, at this point, limited the students that we have engaged because we are in the early stages of this. We really just want to get students engaged in the program. We're obviously focusing our efforts on the same populations that are targeted for ESSER funds. But beyond that, we're enabling schools to just make those decisions based on their local context.

And then, finally, students must complete a minimum of 36 hours of tutoring time per student. So that's something that we work out with the schools. We have each school sign a memorandum of understanding, or an MOU, with those program requirements in it just to make sure that we have that all on the same [42:53] right from the start. And then, finally, we have ensured that our metrics and the way that we're setting up the program are aligned with our universal work that all schools are engaging in within our instructional priority, so that's transformative social-emotional academic learning work in addition to planning for culturally and linguistically responsive education through the instructional core. Those are the two major strategies. And so, this third strategy is following the lead from what's happening during the actual instructional day. With that, I'm excited to turn it over to Bernard McCune to talk about the next part of the playbook.

BERNARD MCCUNE

Good afternoon. Again, I'm Bernard McCune, Associate Chief of Academics. When you talk about any initiative or thing that's going on in a district, what you're looking for is success. And as Brittany talked about, we had the opportunity to work with teachers, our partners, and leaders in central office staff on design teams around how would we most effectively utilize the resources that we have as a district and were getting to make sure that they align and produce great student outcomes.

To do that, one of the things that continually came up with each group is that there has to be a focus on this and somebody whose responsibility that this is. We made the decision to create the expanded academic learning department so that when we look at the funds and the coherence of our strategy as a district, we had somebody who could focus on making sure what we were doing around expanded academic learning was not a separate thing, but part of our district vision and strategy. Because the other thing that we heard from leaders is they can't have one other thing to do. So we're making this part of the team.

The other thing is, we want to make this not getting back to where we were, but it's a real opportunity to re-envision education and what we're doing. How do we get better with

expanded academic learning, which means expanded opportunities? So as we created the department, one of the key things that you have to do is, I believe that great people can get things done, even when you don't have a lot of resources. And if you have a lot of resources and not the right people leading the work, then you won't be effective in the long run. We were lucky enough we have both now. So as we looked for a leader of this, we wanted to have somebody who had a deep academic background and understood schools and how to move students as well as somebody who understood all the things that go along with operating in a large school district and central office. We were lucky enough to find that in the leader you just heard from, Brittany Miller.

As we reflected and we communicated these things out, one of the things that I heard from leaders was, "This is a time that the district got it right." There have been times in the past that there had been initiatives or an influx of dollars, but we made it everybody's job instead of one person's job to ensure that we were all holding ourselves accountable and responsible. And so, leaders are very happy that this was not another thing that was thrust upon them to figure out, but it was something that we, as a central office, were going to be able to provide support and accountability.

Now, the other thing to think about, and what came up, was around budget. District staff are sometimes very used to things coming and things going. And so the question was, OK, ESSER funding is only for a limited amount of time. What happens after it's gone? And how we looked at that is the fact that, number 1, we're planning for things for success. If what we're doing is successful, we will seek funds to keep that going. And the wonderful thing about a school district is, we go through a budget prioritization process every year. The job of a district is to fund the things that are most impactful for students in schools. And our hope is what we're doing with grade-level coaching and tutoring, and the things we're doing in expanded academic learning, will prove successful. And when they do, we'll make the decision to go out and seek additional funding or if it's what our students, our schools, and our community wants and needs, then we'll make the budget prioritization that we need to keep what's most effective for students.

That's how we, as a district, are looking to make sure that this is effective from an operational standpoint. Now, I will turn it back over to Brittany to talk about our design for impact as we go through this process.

BRITTANY MILLER

Thanks so much, Bernard. And I will try to slow down just a little bit. Saw that comment in the chat, so apologies for that. I'll share the model that we're using in terms of the program parameters for each school just one more time, assuming that that was something that folks really wanted to hear. And again, we will follow up with some information and resources following this.

So again, the model that we designed alongside our teachers and leaders is small groups of students, so one to four students at a time per tutor, a minimum of three to five times a week. We are aligned to the district curriculum, and for schools that don't use that, then they align to their own curriculum that they use in their building. We have flexibility in that area. We find that the best way to do it is during the school day, again for that attendance. That's the most successful, but we don't want to limit schools if they can't go before or after school. That's another option. The tutoring is designed to be a collaborative learning environment and follow

best instructional practices that we know are engaging and not like rote sit-and-get or any sort of rote skill memorization, that kind of thing. As many or as few students as a school wants to enroll is what we're doing right now just in these early stages as we learn. And then they must complete a minimum of 36 hours of tutoring across the course of the school year. So that's the program model.

In terms of designing for impact, I'll talk a little bit about the early work that we've kind of laid as the foundation for that and then how we're planning to continue checking in with folks now that we have the program launched and under way.

We're working on an outcomes-based contract with our external vendor. That's based on some work that we've been partnering with the Harvard Outcomes-Based Contracting Consortium on. And in that contract with our external vendor for mathematics, it's an outcomes-based contract. So what that means is, our vendor only gets paid their full fee if they meet the outcomes, both instructional and social-emotional, again, aligned to our universal work that we're doing as a district. For the SEL outcome, that's based on a survey that the tutors give to students at the end of each session to assess their engagement and whether or not they found value in the time while they were in that session.

The other part is based on assessment that measures growth within mathematics so that we can see how students are growing over time. The model that the vendor has is a pre-post, but there are also formative assessments that the tutors give every day, and they put feedback into their platform. And then, our teachers meet with our vendor to set up a teacher account and to then to also embed a link to the tutoring sessions into either Google Classroom or their Schoology course so the students can access it really easily. And parents can also set up an account so parents, teachers, leaders, district staff, students all have access to the data and information about how the sessions are going day by day.

Finally, we ensure that we're meeting with the schools on a weekly basis with the vendor, and then we meet as a central staff with the vendor once a week as well, so we're able to review the data on how schools are doing and address any areas where perhaps we have really low student attendance, or students are reporting that they're not finding value in the sessions, or where they are, so that we're able to learn from those bright spots and also intervene really early if something's off track with a group of students or at a school so that we can get those students back on track. Because we also really want to make sure that students feel successful with this and that they are engaged and like the program. We want to make sure that it's worth their time and effort that our students are putting in as well.

That's kind of the outcomes-based contract component of it. I started talking a little bit about the data systems and goals. One of the other things that we've kind of learned along the way is that we really needed to figure out a way to embed the tutoring data in terms of what students were receiving tutoring into our overall districtwide data systems. That way, as a school is meeting with their principal manager or with their teaching staff, they're able to see the data for students involved in tutoring, both from the tutoring session itself, but also for the district data at large. With that district data at large, we want to make sure that a school can see how students are doing, not just with tutoring but with the assessments and tasks that the teacher is giving within the classroom, how their overall attendance rate just in school in general is, those kinds of things so that they can see the impact of tutoring for the students that are engaged in that program within data processes that they already have going.

And so, the way that we've been doing that is to enroll students in that infinite campus course, which is the scheduling system that our schools use, so that way, it's automatically baked into the data. So that's a little bit more work on the part of the school to have to enroll students in that, but then it just kind of automates everything and systematizes it, both for the school to use the data in a really actionable way and to take that burden of having to do any sort of reporting on successes of the program off of the building leader for us to be able to report back around how this effort is going for both federal and our district reporting purposes in order to measure that impact.

Again, for the family connection, ensuring our families also have that data, the vendor does have that data platform where families can log in and see students' data directly. And then, for our teacher-led program, the more homegrown one, for every hour of tutoring that teachers are providing, we're stipending them an additional 30 minutes of extra duty pay for planning time. And as a part of those planning expectations, we've set the expectation that the tutor or the teacher that's giving the tutoring to their students will have a minimum of a once-a-week outreach to the family explaining how things are going. And that section of the playbook, from the district playbook, was really helpful to us in providing some guidance to teachers in terms of how they could structure that feedback in different ways that would be a fairly reasonable lift for the school.

And then finally, to continuously improve these efforts, we're going to reconvene those cross-functional groups that both Bernard and I were speaking to alongside our educators at the beginning of November actually, so that we're able to monitor the impact of the progress of the pilot and we can make those more short-cycle adjustments as needed in addition to planning more long term into the coming years. And these groups will return to the design group recommendations that we had from the spring and actually see are we doing what we said we were going to do, what is the data telling us, and how is that implementation going, and how can we improve it. That's really important because we've heard over and over again, and I'm sure we're not the only district in this boat, "We'll design something really great," and then if we don't constantly check in with the people who are doing the work in schools, it's really hard to know if what we designed is actually having the impact that we need it to have until it's far too late to make those more immediate course adjustments.

With that, speaking of school leaders, I'm very thrilled to have with us one of our own school leaders here in Denver who is really championing this work at her school. Kayla, thank you so much for being such an amazing partner with us and for doing such great work at your school in this effort. With that, I'll turn it over to the amazing Kayla Grayson.

KAYLA GRAYSON-YIZAR

Thank you, Brittany, I appreciate that. As Brittany mentioned, I am Kayla Grayson-Yizar. I am Principal at Florida Pitt Waller ECE through 8th grade. Our school expands from 3-year-olds all the way up to 14-year-olds. Some of the ways that we have leveraged the high-quality tutoring is that, we have followed the best practices mentioned, is that it is built into our school day. We have made sure that our students are still receiving their core math instruction with their core math teacher so they do not lose that touch, of course. And then, they also are receiving other intervention or tutoring opportunities in literacy or in English language development. They also have a separate time when they log on with their Cignition tutor. That's been just huge for us because many of our students do Girls on the Run after school, they also do sports. We have about seven or eight different sports here, lots of clubs and recreation. And we never

wanted our students to have to pick between intervention or tutoring and extracurricular activities.

So it's been wonderful that it's been built into the school day, and we have more control over that. The logistics in order to make that happen were a little bit more strenuous regarding having to make sure that each student had technology, their Chromebooks were up and going with our one-on-one technology, making sure they all had earbuds with microphones built in, making sure that it fit the tutor's schedule along with the teacher's schedule of when they would do small group instruction, and just having those students transition from whole group instruction into that small group time, when they would typically be doing independent activities until it was their turn to work with the teacher. Now, that entire time, they are receiving small group or one-on-one attention. Either a one-on-one or up to a four-on-one ratio. So it's been hugely beneficial that we have more control and more power over the school day to say that we are going to make sure that they have their special education tutor if they are receiving special education services, or we're going to make sure that they take their Chromebook on down to the special ed teacher's classroom if she wants to monitor and make sure and maybe she logs in. And we have some special ed teachers who log into the actual system so they can hear what the tutor is saying, and they can reinforce it with the student as well.

So yes, we've made sure that our students are still receiving their core instruction with their teachers and are getting that second dose of instruction with their tutor when they typically would be doing some independent work until it's their turn to be in a small group with their teacher. Another way that we have found it to be very effective is the coherence with student experience and the school strategy infrastructure. Our current Florida Pitt Waller theme is, "Knowing each student by name, strength, and need." And our Cignition program aligns because it adds another instructional support partner into knowing our students by their names, strengths, and their needs through their diagnostic assessments, through getting to know them, by them having the same tutor every single day. Also, the progress monitoring of the program utilizes the same with our driver of progress monitoring as well.

Our main two drivers in Florida Pitt Waller are standards mastery and culture. And with our standards mastery, we have a strong focus on aggressive monitoring and descriptive feedback. And it's really refreshing, as I observe the students, they are already accustomed to receiving instruction from interventionists, from specialists, from ELD teachers. There is no stigma about that in our building. They actually feel more special when they receive more support. The great thing was that they had no problem feeling like, "Why do I have to get more help?" They actually felt privileged, and they felt very special that they were receiving even more attention and they were really enjoy the experience.

Our school strategy includes a weekly analysis of student work and performance trends during our day, our DDI time, across the specific demographics of our population. And our tutoring implementation program, Cignition, requires the teachers to include that analysis of the work completed with Cignition as well. So the classroom teachers and tutors meet once a week or with the program director to ensure that there is a cascade of information either way to make sure that they are feeling informed of what's happening with their students, and they are able to talk about concerns, or celebrations, or technology issues, or data, or regrouping of the students based on how they're doing on the standards. I really think that it's added another piece of information to the data that they bring to our DDI meetings from the small group, to the exit tickets, to the unit assessments.

Lastly, when it comes to our ownership of student data, it's been very intentional to make sure that our teachers are still very much aware that "you are the owner of your students' growth." And this is an extra help mate, however, you are the student's teacher that they see for 90% of the day, so we still want them to own this data. The students, of course, still have core instruction with their teachers. We have made it so that our elementary students are only having their tutoring program four days a week during the school day, and that one day a week, they do not attend, and that is their touch-base time to get back with their teacher and do anything their teacher wants to do during that small group time.

We also have our teachers required to create a login into the tutoring platform so they can monitor that progress as well as the engagement that the students are providing or giving with their tutor. Our teachers attend their weekly data check-in meetings to discuss their concerns, and they're also required to integrate the data from the tutoring program into their data trackers that they use so they can have a more thorough discussion with their team and with our dean of instruction about how their students are doing. Lastly, our teachers attend a once-a-month, one-on-one data check-in with me. And at that time, I also ask them questions and inquire about "what differences the tutoring program is making, what are you noticing, what is the growth, how can I support more, how is it relating to your current data. The same trainings that the program is showing, do you see that growth in your classroom?"

So far, all of the teachers have said, "Wow, it really aligns very closely, and that the same things that I see my student is struggling with are the same things that the tutor is noticing. But the same success that I'm having, the tutor is having that success." So we kind of worry about them having that correlation. Sometimes they do well over here, but if it's a different voice or a different face, sometimes it's kind of a breakdown of information. But I've been really impressed with the students being able to translate the same standard from their teacher to also what they're hearing from their tutor as well and making those connections. So that is how we are employing the tutoring program. It was not a piece of cake in the beginning. It was a lot of pre-work, a lot of planning and logistics. However, it has been completely worth it, and all of our students are really enjoying it and they are engaging every single day. Thank you.

KATIE DRUMMOND

Thanks so much, Kayla, and all the other Denver personnel. I know this is really helpful, specific information for other districts and states that are looking at tutoring or maybe they already have a tutoring program and they want to improve it. I'm going to go ahead and direct the rest of the speakers some really good questions from our audience. And if everyone who has spoken thus far wants to put their cameras back on, I will perhaps call on you for a few of these questions.

Let me first ask some questions that have come in about tutoring from the human resource side of things and just some basic questions that maybe we could go back to Denver for, and then Susanna and Kathy, you might have a broader perspective from the other districts you've worked with. Brittany, could you say a little bit more…obviously, you have used an external vendor for math, but then you've used teachers in the school, live in-person, when it comes to literacy. But can you say a little bit more about what you looked for in terms of training the tutors, preparing them to actually do these sessions, and maybe you can speak in particular to how they're culturally responsive and ready to interact with diverse [1:08:24]?

Yeah, thanks, Katie. For the teacher-led effort here in Denver…again, all of this was just based on the recommendations that our educators gave to us back in the spring, so we're implementing what they said that we should be doing, obviously in a cross-functional group. But the teacher-led effort at K–5 was what our educators really wanted to prioritize because they just really felt the need to rebuild those relationships with students coming back full-time in person, and that was really important to them. In terms of the training that we offered to launch that with our teacher-led program, we put together a short information session. I'm really not even calling it a professional learning because that's not what it is. It's like, "You're going to get paid an extra 30 minutes of planning time. Here's the template from National Student Support Accelerator that you might use to kind of design your lesson." We worked with our curriculum teams to specify that by content area.

And then, we also are offering to purchase curriculum resources for the schools that are engaged in the grade-level coaching and tutoring based on what they would need in order to make it successful in their school. Some schools are like, "We've got the resources we need, we're good." Other schools needed some new leveled readers that were aligned with the science of reading. Some needed the intervention curriculum that accompanies our districtwide math curriculum. So we're purchasing those materials for them, and then the school is really working to ensure that tutors meet on a weekly basis to work together. And we just got the data back from our first round of folks who took that info session, so we're analyzing that to determine what's the next level of learning that everybody needs. The lesson learned there, because it was a little bumpy to set all that up, was, "Let's not let perfection be the enemy of good," right? Let's do something now to get people off the ground and going, and then they'll tell us what else they need, and we can provide that. Having that infrastructure of that extra 30 minutes came from one of our early pilots, specifically with multilingual learners, and they found that really helpful because then, we can set really clear expectations for how to use that planning time in order to plan lessons, analyze data, meet with other tutors in the building, and then, of course, contact families on a weekly basis.

In terms of the culturally responsive component of that, that is universal for all schools in Denver. For our teacher-led program, that is something that every teacher participates in, just being part of our DPS system. It's completely baked into all of our professional learning, to our new educator content, to our leader content, etc. And it's part of schools' Black Excellence plans as well, which is another part of our work here in Denver. For our teacher-led program, it's already built in. We've ensured that our CRE team took a look at the resources we were putting out and embedded it into that course, specifically with the SEL component of that lesson-planning template so that we gave more specific problems to our context here in Denver.

And then, for the Cignition-led efforts, they have their own training program, and one of their requirements was that they have that CRE (culturally responsive education) component as part of what their tutors are being trained on and consistently coached on. And then the program director will go into the sessions and actually observe the sessions in action so that she can provide feedback to the tutors as well and make sure we're addressing anything there. The other component of that that's really important for our context here is that we have tutors available in Spanish. That was one of our reasons for choosing the vendor we chose, because we wanted to ensure that we were able to offer that instruction in Spanish. If the student is on an IEP or they need Spanish language instruction, our principal lets the vendor know, and then

the vendor finds a tutor that either speaks Spanish, if that's the need, or is a certified special education teacher, if that's the need. And they've been hiring since this spring so that's how we were able to get here. We said, "We're going to have a lot of kids engaged. We're going to need to have a lot of people." So they've been hiring for a while.

KATIE DRUMMOND

And that actually hints at another question that we received about tutors. Maybe Susanna and Kathy can chime in on this. But in general, what have you seen in terms of districts and how they're handling the worker shortage, so to speak? We know a lot of folks have dropped out of the workforce, and I think our audience is aware that that extends to individuals who might be doing tutoring, and they've found that it's extremely difficult to find teachers who might do additional hours and also external providers might have trouble locating tutors themselves. Is this something you all have been hearing?

SUSANNA LOEB

Yes, I [1:13:36] as well, so it's across the country right now. I think there are a number of really interesting approaches that places are taking. Sometimes, it's working with teachers, sometimes paraprofessionals, AmeriCorps. City Year, for example, in Providence has switched over. What City Year members do is now tutoring, where it wasn't before. They've repurposed some of the people who were already working in the district. Then, some states have been putting together teaching corps, which help to attract a corps of tutors centrally so that then districts can pull off of that, and that's very useful. One that we've really been spending a lot of time on, though, because I think it has implications for the long run, is thinking about the role that universities can play.

I think there are two particular ways here. One is through teacher preparation programs, where many teacher preparation programs, the first thing that teachers do is observe in a classroom. You can imagine that instead of observing in a classroom, a teacher in training could tutor, get practice really working with a student, interacting with parents and teachers in that way, and it can be at least as strong an experience. And if teacher preparation programs could build that in, that would be a supply that could be sustainable in the long run because of the clear benefits for the tutor as well as the students.

And then, the second one is for university students, undergraduates, and graduates who aren't in teacher preparation. There are districts we're working with, for example, that are working with their local engineering school, their local math department for students from there who come in with some skills that are more difficult to attract. And what's great about working with the non-teacher-ed part of the university as well is that we might be improving the pipeline into teaching in terms of getting people, both who are local—and that's one of the nice things about universities—and have these diverse skills, whether it is math or speaking other languages, things like that, that are harder.

So I think lots of districts are looking to see whom they can attract from within and from community groups in their local area. Some of them are working with universities and others are just recruiting. Then, one of the advantages of working with some of these programs is that they can bring in their own tutors. I think people are using multiple methods to try to recruit tutors at this time. Kathy, do you have anything?

KATHY BENDHEIM

I believe everyone would prefer to be in-person tutoring. But it is effective as well to do virtual tutoring. So that is another option, particularly for more rural places, that you can recruit tutors and use them virtually with the students.

KATIE DRUMMOND

And we actually have a lot of questions that have come in about the virtual context. I think people are wondering, can this be done over Zoom or another platform, and what does it really looks like? Are the students actually screen sharing with tutors? There definitely is interest in this distance learning aspect. Kayla, would you want to talk a little bit about what you see in your school with the use of the platform and your vendor?

KAYLA GRAYSON-YIZAR

Sure. So our vendor utilizes quite a few steps, but ultimately, it goes to Google Meets, which is one of the approved partners that we use, and the parents have agreed for students to use in the remote setting. And so, we utilize Clever to kind of house their passwords, and we put links on their CSAR [?] and Schoology accounts, so it's really easy for them to pull it up. The first day took a little bit of time with a click path for the students. But then, once they got used to the click path, it was nothing that they had not seen before, really. It was just kind of navigating through. And so, by the second day, they were able to get through, and then they just navigated to the Google Meets. And, of course, the link changes every day. I think that's for student privacy, FERPA, private things like that. The link changes every day, but the students follow the same click path, and they communicate via Google Meets.

So far, it's been very, very little technical issues. The type that are typical, where we just call the number, and they kind of redirect us or update a link. But we haven't had very many students who have struggled whatsoever with the program. They just log on and get started. And because of the experience in the end of the year and last year, they're very proficient with technology. All of those tools, the Nearpods, and the Pear Decks, and all that kind of stuff have kind of overprepared them for what they're utilizing right now. So it's been great.

KATIE DRUMMOND

As Kathy's pointing out in the chat box, the research lags a little bit here because the original research on tutoring was done before the time of the pandemic and so many platforms that are out there but sort of out of necessity, obviously, some tutoring programs have moved that direction.

Let me try to ask a few rapid-fire funding questions, also a hot topic. In addition to the ARP funding, what other funds are available to sustain a tutoring program? And maybe Susanna, if you want to talk about this first, and then Bernard, I think it was you who mentioned that Denver certainly was thinking about sustainability and how to do this for the long term when they plan their program. So Susanna and then Bernard.

SUSANNA LOEB

Yes, so our hope is that the funding here will bring the programs in if they are successful. Then, there's a way to use Title I funding, a whole bunch of other kinds of funding sources that could support this in the long run. It's just a choice of programs, and I think it's just been

shown to be such an effective approach. But it has to work with the district. So I do think there are funds in there, but you'll have to make the choice to allocate it.

BERNARD MCCUNE

Yes, and I would say something similar. Most districts have access to a number of funds with the purpose of making sure they benefit students. We will, as we do every year, but when we see the success of some of these things, we're always going to fund what's most impactful for students. And the best thing about districts is, every year we get to go through this process of reassessing what is most impactful for our students, what we should invest more in, or whether we should shift funding. And so, we will do that as it comes to grade-level coaching and tutoring as well.

KATIE DRUMMOND

Great, thanks so much. I know we're getting close on time here, but I did want to just give a thank you to another panelist from our first webinar back in September, Alan Safran. He's been chiming in with a few things about Saga tutoring, another math program, and I want to just remind everyone that we have been recording this session. We will send the recording out, and we will also send the slides. And I believe, Brittany, you may have a few additional items you mentioned that could be helpful from Denver's example. So we'll track all that down and send it out to the participants. In addition, there will be a survey link, and we ask for your feedback so we can plan for our next webinar session.

And we will have a session in mid-November that delves deeper into the specifics of math tutoring versus literacy tutoring and AmeriCorps, Reading Corps, Math Corps, which I think have been mentioned a couple of times in our chat box. They will be one of our presenters, so we look forward to hearing more about those details. In the meantime, we just want to thank the panelists for their time, and interrupting the school day and the flow of district work. We know it's often very hectic, so we really appreciate the input. And I think this has been really helpful for our audience. Take care.