

ESEA and Tutoring: A “Best” Option for Supplemental Services

For the first time in their long history, Title I funds can now be used to help parents in failing schools obtain supplemental services for their children. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which includes Title I, requires schools that do not make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) for three consecutive years to provide supplemental educational services to low-achieving, economically disadvantaged students. But beginning in 2002-03, parents with children in as many as 3,000 schools already identified as failing under the 1994 ESEA will have access to supplemental services. One of the services mentioned in the law is tutoring. Research indicates that one-on-one tutoring can be a particularly effective intervention — when it meets certain criteria.

This Action Guide presents research-based components of effective tutoring programs. Many states are now developing criteria for identifying approved supplemental service providers, including organizations, agencies, and companies that will provide tutoring services in reading and math, the two subjects emphasized in ESEA. All providers should offer tutoring programs that have these research-based components.

Many Will Be Eligible To Provide Tutoring Services

The law suggests that a wide range of groups and agencies could be eligible to provide tutoring and other supplemental services.

ESEA defines “provider” as a non-profit or for-profit organization, or local education agency, such as a school or school district.

Childcare centers that provide school-age care, companies that market tutoring and after-school programs, and private organizations could be eligible providers.

What ESEA Says About Tutoring

ESEA defines supplemental services as “tutoring” and “other supplemental academic enrichment services” that are:



- In addition to instruction provided during the school day
- High quality, research-based, and specifically designed to increase students' academic achievement on ESEA-required assessments (in reading and math) and attain proficiency in meeting state achievement standards

In addition to tutoring, states could offer parents before- and after-school services or summer school programs.

Research-Based Components of Effective Tutoring Programs

Researchers have identified the following components of effective tutoring programs. The research focuses on tutoring programs in reading, but has broader application.

The components apply, with varying degrees, to tutoring programs that employ paid tutors or volunteer tutors. Programs that school districts, schools, and for-profit companies offer will likely employ paid tutors who are either teachers or specially trained adults. Programs that community-based, or church-affiliated organizations offer may rely on volunteer tutors.

We believe it is far better to use paid, certified teachers, or paid, specially-trained paraprofessionals as tutors. They have the necessary knowledge base; they are more reliable than volunteer tutors; and they often are better able than volunteers to coordinate tutoring with classroom instruction.

Researchers have found that tutoring programs are most effective when:

1. Tutors are either certified teachers, or specially trained paraprofessionals, or volunteers who are supervised by a certified teacher.
2. Tutors receive ongoing training and feedback.
3. Tutoring sessions are structured and contain basic subject-related elements.
4. Tutoring is intensive and consistent.
5. Tutors use quality materials with students.
6. Each student's progress is assessed regularly.
7. Tutoring is coordinated with regular classroom instruction.
8. Volunteer tutors are given incentives so they make a long-term commitment to tutoring.
9. After-school tutoring programs are coordinated by an individual at the school.



Tutors are either certified teachers, or specially trained paraprofessionals or volunteers who are supervised by a certified teacher.

Some nationally known tutoring programs use certified teachers to tutor students during the school day. For example, Reading Recovery uses highly-trained, certified reading teachers. Success for All, which is more than a tutoring program, includes a tutoring component that uses certified reading teachers, other certified teachers who are trained as reading tutors, and trained paraprofessionals to tutor students during the school day.

In contrast, most after-school tutoring programs do not use certified teachers or trained paraprofessionals as tutors. Instead, their tutors are volunteers who have varying levels of expertise, education, and experience.

If a tutoring program uses volunteer tutors, a certified teacher should supervise them. In addition to supervising tutors on a daily basis, the certified teacher assesses the student's skills, develops lesson plans for the tutors to implement, observes the volunteers, and provides them with feedback and support as they work with students.

Researchers who have studied reading tutoring programs explain the important role of these certified-teacher supervisors. Unlike the volunteers, subject-matter specialists have the knowledge to diagnose students' problems and determine what concepts and skills need to be addressed. The specialist then uses the information from the assessment to develop a detailed diagnosis and tutoring plan.

Tutors receive ongoing training and feedback.

Studies show that effective tutoring programs train tutors in key aspects of the subject area in which they provide tutoring. As important, these programs teach tutors how to help students learn to read, to do math, etc. It is not sufficient, for example, for tutors to be competent readers themselves, they must know what is involved in learning to read and in teaching students to read.

The most effective training is labor-intensive and requires qualified staff. Ideally, teachers who are subject-matter experts should provide tutors with initial training, observe them while they are tutoring to provide feedback, and continue to train tutors over time.

In addition, tutors need opportunities to share their own ideas and experiences with other volunteers and with a certified subject-matter expert. In this way, tutors learn from their experiences, from each other, and from the reading, math, or other subject-matter specialist who is there to support them.



Tutoring sessions are structured and contain basic subject-related elements.

Studies of successful reading tutoring programs find that while the programs differ in how they teach reading, all lessons include four basic elements.

First, students reread a familiar story or other, easy connected text. This provides an opportunity to practice fluency in reading, work on word recognition, and improve comprehension.

Second, students engage in word analysis activities in which they attend to the letters in words, hear and record sounds in words, and link sound sequences to letter sequences. Done in isolation, and in the context of reading text, students practice words they know, and learn new words and their meaning.

Third, students write in each tutoring session so they can see the relationship between reading and print.

Fourth, students read a new story, such as one that has recently been introduced in class or one that is appropriate to their current reading level. Reading a new story allows students to practice reading familiar and unfamiliar words, to build vocabulary, and to work in comprehension.

These four elements provide a consistent structure to the reading tutorials and ensure that students receive instruction that will, indeed, help them.

Tutoring sessions in math or other subjects also need to be structured so they enable students to strengthen existing skills, fill in gaps in their skill base, and acquire new skills so they can keep up with their peers during regular classroom instruction.

Tutoring is intensive and consistent.

Studies of tutoring in reading indicate that students should receive tutoring services for a minimum of 1.5 to 2 hours per week. Programs such as Reading Recovery and Success for All tutor students five days a week for 20 to 30 minutes, respectively, during the school day. Some successful after-school tutoring programs tutor students for an hour after school, four times a week.

But most after-school programs that use volunteer tutors often schedule fewer tutoring sessions per week. The more time the student has to work on skills, the better. Other programs offer tutoring to small groups of students, rather than to one student. Tutoring is most effective if it is one-on-one. When adults work with two or three students, they are providing small group instruction.



Consistency is also important in tutoring. Researchers say that a student should be tutored by the same tutor every week. This allows the student and tutor to build a relationship. The tutor develops an understanding of the student, and the student begins to trust the tutor and is less likely to be afraid to admit that she does not understand something.

Studies indicate that tutors' ability to measure the students' progress, to know what skills need to be addressed, and to understand students' specific needs are enhanced when tutors work consistently with the same students.

Tutors use quality materials with students.

Quality materials are key to the success of a tutoring program, but studies have shown that they are frequently neglected, usually because of cost. Tutors need books, paper, pencils, markers, and materials students can manipulate and work with, such as letter and number blocks, word blocks, counters and tiles, letter strips, journals, etc.

The materials used in tutoring should not be borrowed from classroom materials. Nor should tutors be expected to provide the materials themselves. Instead, the materials used for tutoring need to be purchased for, or be incorporated into, the tutoring program.

Each student's progress is assessed regularly.

Ongoing assessment plays a critical role in tutoring. It provides information to modify and tailor lessons for individual students. Studies show that periodic assessments should focus on the skills and concepts that are presented in the tutoring sessions, and assessments should be linked to tutor training. The more tutors know about how their tutees are progressing, the better they are able to provide students with appropriate lessons and helpful feedback.

Tutoring is coordinated with regular classroom instruction.

Tutoring should be closely aligned with what the student is learning in regular classroom instruction.

First, it is more effective for tutors (and less confusing for students) to use the same method of instruction that is used in the classroom.

Second, it is easier and more effective if tutors use materials that are the same or similar to those used in regular classroom instruction. If the tutor works with the same stories or the same math problems that were presented in class, the student has repeated opportunities to work on these materials. As the student masters material in tutoring session, she is more likely to perform better in class.



Coordinating tutoring and classroom instruction does not mean that tutoring should mirror what is done in the classroom. Instead, tutors offer opportunities for additional practice on concepts and skills presented in the classroom, present new strategies, and provide explanations that support, reinforce, and build on what students are learning in class.

Volunteer tutors are given incentives so they make a long-term commitment to tutoring.

Tutoring programs that use volunteer tutors need to provide incentives for ensuring that the volunteers attend tutoring sessions frequently and consistently. Some successful programs pay volunteer tutors a small stipend; others pay a stipend, and provide lunch or transportation; and still others release tutors from their full-time jobs for tutoring. In addition, volunteer tutors need to be recognized and appreciated if they are expected to make long-term commitments to a tutoring program, through award programs, celebrations, and the like.

After-school tutoring programs are coordinated by an individual at the school site.

Studies also show that an on-site program coordinator is essential to the success for after-school tutoring programs. This person is on-site and is responsible for implementing the program, including scheduling tutoring sessions, assuring that tutors meet with students, making sure tutors have the materials they need, recruiting and retaining tutors, and coordinating ongoing training activities for the tutors. Often the coordinator is a certified teacher who can provide this training.

ESEA Lists Criteria for Tutoring Programs

The law says that providers of tutoring and other supplemental services must:

1. Have a demonstrated record of effectiveness in increasing students' academic achievement
2. Provide parents, the school, and/or district with information on children's progress in a format and, in a language that parents understand
3. Ensure that the services they provide are consistent with the local instructional program and aligned with state standards
4. Provide instruction and content that are secular, neutral, and non-ideological



Parents Will Choose Tutoring and Other Services

Parents request tutoring and other supplemental services for their children, and they select a service provider from a list of state-approved providers.

School districts are required to: provide parents with information on the availability of supplemental services; identify approved providers within the district and in neighboring districts; and provide a brief description of the services, qualifications, and demonstrated effectiveness of each provider.

Districts also must notify parents if their children are eligible for supplemental services. These services are available for low-income students who attend schools designated for school improvement for the second consecutive year, as well as students who attend schools designated for corrective action or restructuring.

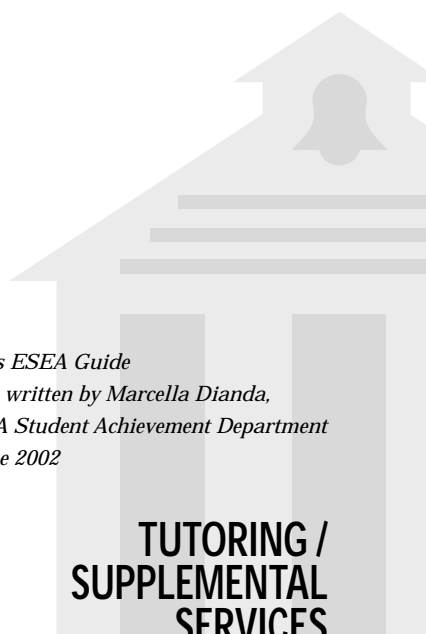
In addition, districts are required to assist parents in selecting a provider from the approved list if parents ask for such assistance. And once parents select a provider, the district must work with the parents and the provider to develop achievement goals for the student, determine how the student's progress will be assessed, and create a timetable for improving achievement.

The plan also must describe how the parents and student's teachers will be updated regularly on the student's progress, and provide for the termination of the agreement if the provider fails to meet the goals and the timetable.

Resources

Wasik, B. April 1998. Using Volunteers as Reading Tutors: Guidelines for Successful Practices. *The Reading Teacher*, 51(7), pp. 562-570.

Wasik, B. July – August, 1998. Volunteer Tutoring Programs in Reading: A Review. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(3), pp. 266-292.

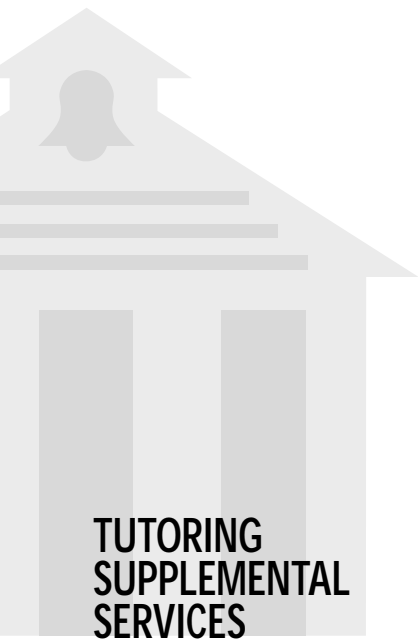


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