

## TUTORING CASE STUDY

# Guilford County Schools

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is the third largest school district in North Carolina serving Greensboro, High Point, and the surrounding areas. In the fall of 2020, amidst pandemic fueled learning losses, the district launched what was to become a nationally recognized tutoring program—with just five tutors leading the charge. Now 600 tutors and 6,000 students strong, the program has drawn widespread acclaim for its rapid growth and success rooted in strategic partnerships and research-based practices. We spoke to **Dr. Faith Freeman**, who spearheaded the program in her prior role as the GCS Director of STEM and continues to support it as the Co-Director for the Institute for Partnerships in Education at UNC Greensboro. We also spoke to **Kara Hamilton**, who is currently the Director of Tutoring and has been with the GCS Tutoring Department since summer 2021. Below, we summarize the district's experience growing and scaling its tutoring program over the past two years.

## GCS by the numbers

### TOTAL POPULATION



**70,047**  
students



**126**  
schools

### % OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS



**10%**

### RACIAL & ETHNIC MAKEUP



- 42% Black
- 29% White
- 17% Hispanic
- 7% Asian
- 5% Other

### FUNDING PER STUDENT



**\$10,846**

### % OF STUDENTS WITH FREE AND REDUCED MEALS



**61%**

# Tutoring Program Overview

## The Vitals

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### Model

**High-dosage.** (students receive services at least three times a week, for at least a half hour per session) and **on-demand** (students initiate tutoring sessions on a virtual platform).



### Program Type

High-dosage tutoring offered in-person during the school day is administered **internally**, with tutors recruited from area high schools and colleges as well as through the North Carolina Education Corps. The district's on-demand, Virtual Helpline utilizes a platform provided by an **external partner**, Saga Education, in conjunction with its own curriculum and tutors.



### Student Group(s) Prioritized

The program targets students based on **academic need**, providing high-dosage tutoring to all K-12 students whose NWEA MAP scores are in the 20th percentile and below. Additionally, virtual, on-demand homework help is open to all students in grades 3-12.



### Grades Served & Subjects Covered

The 2020 pilot was exclusively for middle school math students; today, the program offers K-12 math and/or ELA tutoring to **all K-12 students** in the target population, and **grades 5 and 8 participants may also receive biology and social studies tutoring**. The district's Virtual Helpline is open to students in grades 3-12 for Math and/or ELA.



### Session Timing

High-dosage, in-person tutoring normally takes place **during the school day, for three 30-minute sessions per week per subject**, while the Virtual Helpline is available on-demand, Monday-Thursday, from 5-8 p.m.



### Delivery Method

Schools decide how tutoring is delivered, either one-on-one and/or in small groups, by college and high school students who were trained in the district's curriculum, instructional resources, and best tutoring practices. Due to the constraints of the pandemic, it began as a virtual model, but **92% of high-dosage tutoring is now delivered in-person**. The Virtual Helpline is 100% remote.

# Program Journey

## From Decision-Making to Outcomes-Monitoring



### Deciding on Tutoring

**GCS launched its tutoring program at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as the district grappled with learning loss.** As pre-existing achievement gaps widened, GCS leaders recognized the urgency of supporting struggling students, particularly those in the bottom 20 percent of their grades. GCS drew on research to decide on its initial focus area of middle school math, where the largest academic deficits were identified. Freeman noted that what began as an academic support program quickly became so much more. “We’re impacting kids academically, but we’re also having our [tutors serve] as mentors to a lot of these students,” Freeman emphasized.



### Setting Requirements

**With 126 schools in the district, it was important to GCS to be consistent in its approach to tutoring.** Instructional consistency was key, so the district made sure all tutors were trained in its standards-aligned curriculum. To ensure the student population being served was determined in a uniform way, GCS asked schools to identify participants by using NWEA Map Scores to pinpoint students in the 20th percentile and below.



## Implementing

**Strong community partnerships and good communication have been cornerstones of the district's success.** Recognizing the importance of tutors who understand the district, GCS drew its homegrown tutor base from local high schools and colleges, including a nearby HBCU, and members of the North Carolina Education Corps. "It's really the community that makes our program unique," Freeman said, noting how powerful it has been for students to see themselves reflected in their tutors. Communication and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders has been equally important. "There are so many departments that are part of this effort," Freeman said. "We couldn't do the things that we do without our Research and Accountability Department, HR, Payroll, [and] Curriculum Department."



## Monitoring Outcomes

**GCS has a robust system in place to evaluate student outcomes and gauge the program's effectiveness.** In partnership with Brown University and the Annenberg Institute, the GCS Research and Accountability Department created an app for tutors that tracks what subjects students are being tutored in, the length of tutoring sessions, and student performance on assessments throughout the school year. Unique to GCS' self-evaluation process is the district's use of both quantitative and qualitative measures to assess student and school growth. Currently, GCS is conducting a qualitative analysis focused on how tutoring is being implemented and facilitated at each school. The district plans to use its findings to evaluate student and school growth and share progress with the community.

"This type of data will inform programmatic improvements or enhancements we can make to better support our GA tutors," Freeman said. Hamilton echoed Freeman's sentiments. "The qualitative piece is critical for us to understand how to better support students and schools," she said.

# “What would you do differently?”

## Top Tip from GCS



### PLAN AHEAD FOR YOUR PROGRAM'S GROWTH.

As encouraging as it was for GCS to have their tutoring program grow so rapidly, Kara Hamilton shared that the district was not fully prepared for “how quickly this became an organization within an organization.” The processes they implemented worked initially, Hamilton said, but as the program’s size and scope surged, they soon outgrew them. Turning to new tools and procedures will be essential as they continue to scale the program.



### HARNESS TECHNOLOGY TO TRACK PROGRAM DATA.

“Our tutor database is a spreadsheet with seven hundred individuals,” Hamilton said, making it difficult to access, track, and analyze important data about the program. To make program data more easily accessible, the district is now transitioning to a database which has all of the data they capture in one place.