

## TUTORING CASE STUDY

# Lenoir City Schools

Lenoir City Schools (LCS) is a small school district (1 elementary, 1 middle, and 1 high school, plus 1 virtual institute) southwest of Knoxville, Tennessee. LCS piloted an intensive tutoring program for high school math students in the fall of 2021. Pleased with the enthusiastic community response to the pilot, they soon thereafter scaled tutoring district-wide. We spoke with **Cherie Long**, District-wide Mathematics/Science Instructional Coach; **Shannon Tufts**, District-wide Literacy Instructional Coach; and **Shawn Walker**, Student Success Coordinator, about both the pilot and the program’s broader, in-progress rollout. Below, we summarize their approach and major learnings so far.

## LCS by the Numbers

### TOTAL POPULATION



**2,517**  
students



**4**  
schools

### % OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS



**20%**

### RACIAL & ETHNIC MAKEUP



- 59% White
- 35% Hispanic
- 6% Other

### FUNDING PER STUDENT



**\$10,464**

### % OF STUDENTS WITH FREE AND REDUCED MEALS



**60%**

# Tutoring Program Overview

## The Vitals

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### Model

**High-dosage**; the pilot structure was **daily** tutoring sessions, with each averaging 45 minutes. For the broader, district-wide program, scheduling varies across grades and subjects, but LCS is uniformly committed to a high-dosage approach.



### Program Type

This program is mainly **internal**, i.e. designed and run by LCS staff. The TN Tutoring Corps helped supply LCS with recruiting help, access to curriculum/resources, and additional funding for the rollout (though LCS leadership officially hired and trained all tutors).



### Student Group(s) Prioritized

The pilot targeted students taking the ACT in the spring of 2022, who had **major gaps in their math preparation** due to pandemic interruptions. It was **opt-in**. The larger, district-wide tutoring program targets students **based on academic need**, focusing in particular on those students who are **“approaching” proficiency** on math and literacy state tests (i.e. scoring in the 35th-50th percentile).



### Grades Served & Subjects Covered

The pilot was exclusively for **high school geometry students**; the broader program focuses on **literacy and math tutoring for elementary students** and **math tutoring for secondary students**.



### Session Timing

Sessions take place primarily **during the school day**.



### Delivery Method

Most tutoring district-wide is **in-person, in small groups** (1 to 3 students). LCS has had to shift to virtual delivery at a few points for COVID-related closures, but in-person is the district's preferred and prioritized mode.

# Program Journey

## From Decision-Making to Outcomes-Monitoring

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### Deciding on Tutoring

**The pilot program was borne of a need to make up for instructional time lost during the pandemic**, and particularly to provide ACT math preparation to students who had missed critical pieces of algebra and geometry during “the year the world went dark,” as Long put it. LCS leaders surveyed the junior class about their interest, availability, and scheduling preferences; this process enabled them to identify about 20 students to participate in a 5-week, high-dosage tutoring pilot. The pilot was so successful that LCS embarked on a rapid scaling effort the following year, boosted by support from the TN Tutoring Corps. They’re now offering high-dosage tutoring in literacy and math to all elementary grades, and in math to all secondary grades.



### Setting Requirements

**The parameters of the high school pilot were heavily informed by expressed student needs.** These led LCS to embed the high-dosage model directly into the school day, during students’ advisory period (they also offer a virtual option on the weekends for high schoolers, per student request), and to leverage existing LCS staff as tutors. LCS has held onto much about the structure and ethos of the pilot program as they’ve scaled up: ingraining all tutoring into the daily schedule, conducting extensive outreach to families to ensure their buy-in, and – though they’ve now hired a number of “lay tutors” from outside the school – drawing tutors from the local community, recruiting many former educators, and keeping a tight rein on tutor training internally. District-wide, the focus is acceleration: scaffolding the mainstream, grade-level content for students rather than revisiting pre-grade-level content or skills.



## Implementing

**During 2021-22, the tutoring program built on what was successful in the small-scale pilot and steadily expanded to all grade levels.** This school year (2022-23), all grades 1 to 5 will receive literacy and math tutoring, and grades 6 and up will receive math tutoring. Tutoring is woven into the rhythm of students' regular classes; as Tufts told us, "We worked with the administration to revamp the master schedule so that this was a priority for all students, so that we could service as many as we could... the time is sacred." This design feature has enabled LCS to deliver tutoring to a vast swath of its overall student population.

Among the districts we've studied, LCS is distinctive for the intensiveness of its tutor training and supervision. Both Tufts and Long are heavily involved not just in program oversight, but in developing plans for tutors, training tutors in the content, observing and coaching them, and generally keeping a very close eye on program implementation on the ground. Walker attributes most of the program's success to his colleagues' direct involvement: "Why we've been successful is because of Cherie and Shannon, and their intentionality in the training of these staff, and their intentionality with their time. Cherie's been with the group of tutors who are implementing in the elementary school – every day she's been there to help launch them. And that's why we've seen success." LCS also emphasizes the use of high-quality instructional materials in the tutoring context, leveraging both their core curricula and supplemental tutoring materials offered by the state of TN.



## Monitoring Outcomes

**3 major outcomes were assessed during the pilot: academic growth, as measured by student scores on pre- and post-tests of ACT math content; engagement, as measured by daily attendance and student surveys; and implementation, as measured by observations of each tutor by school administrators.** Across these areas, program data was clear on the benefits of tutoring; 95% of students in the 5-week pilot showed significant growth from pre- to post-test, for example. As the district has scaled tutoring beyond the pilot, they primarily use data from TCAP (the TN state exam) and from student attendance records to assess program effects. They anticipate their first round of "actionable data" about the broader initiative in October of 2022. Walker will present this data at a statewide conference in December, and he's confident that it will be good: "because," he said, "I believe in this program."

Long also highlighted the less quantifiable rewards of tutoring thus far, especially her sense that many students are reaping social-emotional benefits. She relayed, for example, the story of one student to us: "This really resounded with me, something one of our students said in an interview about tutoring. He said, *when I sit in a class of 35, my voice was never heard. My voice was heard in my tutoring sessions.* And that was enough, that was enough for me. Right then, a child was heard – so I can't put a number on that, or a scaled score, or how many points he moved, but he has somebody he knows he can go talk to – who he would never have had if we hadn't done that high-dosage tutoring."

# “What would you do differently?”

## Top Tips from LCS



### **IF RUNNING AN INTERNAL PROGRAM, TAKE IT SLOW WITH PLANNING IN THE BEGINNING.**

Tufts described how, at the start of the literacy initiative in fall of 2021, “I scheduled and planned it out, all the details, October to Christmas. Then 2 weeks in, we found that the routine wasn’t working.” This year, she planned only an initial, 4-week period of tutoring sessions – after which she conducted check-ins with tutors and teachers to set an appropriate course for the next 4 weeks.



### **HELP TEACHERS FEEL LIKE A PART OF THE TUTORING INITIATIVE.**

Walker told us that district leaders realized at some point that they needed to reset on messaging to teachers about tutoring. Some teachers bridled at the way that tutors were seemingly getting outsize credit for student growth. He’s gotten better over time at both helping to build tutor-teacher communication and relationships, and at messaging to teachers that, as he put it, “You’re a part of this story too – we could not do this without you.”