

TUTORING CASE STUDY

Baltimore City Public Schools

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) manages two tutoring programs. It launched high-dosage literacy tutoring for K-2 students in January 2020, quickly followed by multi-subject tutoring for K-12 students in the fall of 2021. Its early literacy program serves over 1,000 K-2 students across 14 schools, while its K-12 initiative serves over 12,000 students, with 13% of the district's student body having received at least six weeks of high-dosage tutoring in 2021-2022. We spoke to City Schools Coordinator of Academic Tutoring **Matt Barrow**, who's encouraged by the initial results of these initiatives and is working to expand their reach to nearly 18,000 students across 129 schools in the coming months. Below, we summarize City Schools approach to tutoring, as well as the district's key insights from designing, managing, and growing two tutoring programs.

Baltimore City Public Schools by the Numbers

TOTAL POPULATION

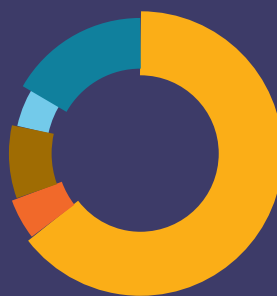


75,995
students



157
schools

RACIAL & ETHNIC MAKEUP



- 73% Black
- 17% Hispanic
- 7% White
- <5% Asian
- <5% Other

% OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS



60.7%

% OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS



12%

FUNDING PER STUDENT



\$21,337

Tutoring Program Overview

The Vitals



Model

High-dosage. (students receive services at least three times a week, for at least a half hour per session).



Program Type

City Schools' K-2 transitional supplemental instruction program (TSI) is **internal**: the district trains and hires its own tutors. The district is also implementing tutoring programs in K-12 that are **external**, partnering with 14 vendors to tutor students with a range of learning needs in different subjects.



Student Group(s) Prioritized

The district's TSI program targets **K-2 students needing Tier 2 early literacy support** (instructional support in small groups). The district's external tutoring program serves **K-12 students who are below grade level and whose school attendance is at least 80%**.



Grades Served & Subjects Covered

The TSI program focuses on literacy for K-2 students. The external program focuses on math, literacy, and a range of other subjects for K-12 students.



Session Timing

High-dosage tutoring for the district's TSI program takes place during **five 30-minute sessions per week**. The timing and frequency of tutoring in the district's external program varies by vendor, subject/grade level, and student/school needs.



Delivery Method

Tutoring for the TSI program is delivered in-person in small groups of no more than four students by paraprofessionals who have been trained in the Foundations early literacy curriculum. For the district's external tutoring program, the delivery method depends on the vendor and student population being served.

Program Journey

From Decision-Making to Outcomes-Monitoring



Deciding on Tutoring

City Schools' tutoring program grew out of Maryland's early intervention efforts, as the state mandated that districts provide supplemental instruction for students in grades K-2. As part of this initiative, City Schools received

a state grant in October 2019 to get its high-dosage tutoring program started. By January 2020, it launched TSI, supporting students who were identified as needing instructional support in small groups.

Seeing early successes as well as additional need, the district invested heavily to expand access tutoring programs across all schools in the fall of 2021 to support K-12 students below grade level in all subject areas. "Our teachers are working incredibly hard every day to provide great instruction for our students, but we know many of them need additional support," Barrow shared. "We believe that high-dosage tutoring is a strategy that can get those students the additional support they need and deserve....This is an incredible learning opportunity for our system to do exactly that."



Setting Requirements

To serve thousands of students with a variety of learning needs, City Schools has taken a multi-tiered approach to tutoring. The TSI program for K-2 literacy uses the

Foundations curriculum, focusing on foundational literacy skills such as initial sounds, blending, segmenting words, and encoding. Based on the findings of former Johns Hopkins professor Dr. Robert Slavin, the district structured its program into small groups of no more than four students and utilizes interventions tailored to students' specific needs. The district's external program serves K-12 students performing below grade level. Recognizing that more students were performing below grade level than there were seats available for tutoring, the district decided to further target students based on attendance; it provides tutoring services for those with a minimum attendance rate of 80% in order to maximize the impact of these resources on accelerating learning.



Implementing

Strategic decision making and being able to pivot have been key to City Schools'

success. Every step of the way, district leaders have had to consider scheduling and budgetary constraints, the challenges of COVID-19, and most importantly, the diverse needs of students and schools. Just two months after launching the district's early literacy program, City Schools had to figure out how to translate their in-person tutoring curriculum to a virtual setting as schools moved online during the pandemic. "Our paraeducator tutors had to set up and maintain virtual classroom environments just like teachers did, planning and delivering the intervention within their Google Classroom," Barrow shared. "Schools figured out how to build this daily time into their virtual schedules, and our central team provided training and coaching support for how to set up and operate within a virtual environment. We also purchased doc cams for each para so that they could still present the critical physical components of the intervention curriculum to a virtual student group."

When City Schools was charged with creating a second, multi-subject, K-12 tutoring program to be implemented at full scale by the following fall, district leaders had a new set of challenges. Racing against the clock, they needed to make sure that any interventions they used were evidence-based under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in order to use ESSER funding. The district's decision to partner with 12 vendors (later expanded to 14) instead of hiring and training its own tutors enabled it to get the program off the ground quickly while meeting these criteria. Furthermore, using multiple vendors with different specializations allowed City Schools to target its efforts based on the unique needs of each school.



Monitoring Outcomes

City Schools is laser-focused on student performance metrics as it evaluates program

success. Drawing on data from assessments at the beginning and end of the school year, as well as tutoring enrollment and attendance data, City Schools learned that, in general, students who participate in at least six weeks of high-dosage tutoring achieved higher growth than those who do not. This year, the district is hard at work on a more granular analysis of its data in order to identify which structures and programs have been most effective for City Schools students. The district plans to adapt its offerings accordingly as it utilizes \$25 million to expand its two tutoring initiatives. "We want to ensure that we are doing everything we can to make high-dosage tutoring effective and sustainable for years to come," Barrow emphasized.

“What would you do differently?”: Top Tips from Baltimore City Public Schools



ESTABLISH A SYSTEM FOR COLLECTING AND MONITORING ATTENDANCE RATES ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF YOUR TUTORING PROGRAM.

“Having a system that gives us visibility into which schools, networks, and programs are effective at consistently getting students into their tutoring sessions and which ones are not has supercharged our ability as a district to use this data...for monitoring implementation and pinpoint where additional support is needed,” Barrow emphasized. “This data is what allows us to engage in real continuous improvement of our tutoring implementation, and as a result we are on track to increase overall tutoring session attendance across all programs by 20 percentage points compared to last year.”



LEARN YOUR DISTRICT’S PROCUREMENT AND INVOICING PROCESS RIGHT AWAY.

“It took a good chunk of time to learn how that part of our organization works and what we... needed to plan for when coordinating with our vendor partners,” Barrow shared. “This sometimes resulted in implementation delays that were disruptive to schools or invoicing delays that were disruptive to our vendors.”



INVEST IN A TEAM TO MANAGE AND IMPLEMENT YOUR PROGRAM.

Barrow underscored the importance of having multiple roles as districts grow and scale their own tutoring initiatives. “This work has many layers that require careful design and strategic planning, effective resource management, and consistent and frequent support provided directly to schools that require more than one individual to manage effectively,” Barrow said.