

TUTORING CASE STUDY

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is unique among our case studies because its tutoring program is both longstanding and well-studied – including in 2 “gold-standard,” randomized control trials that found major, positive learning outcomes. We spoke with **Kelli Easterly**, executive director of STEM at CPS, about the district’s experience, and about their current effort to expand tutoring services to many more Chicago schools. Below, we summarize what we learned from Easterly about the district’s journey and insights thus far.*

CPS by the numbers

TOTAL POPULATION



330,411
students



636
schools

% OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS



19%

RACIAL & ETHNIC MAKEUP



- 47% Hispanic
- 36% Black
- 11% White
- 6% Other

*CPS has 2 distinct tutoring initiatives: the first is the established program with Saga Education, and the second is the nascent CPS Tutor Corps. We focus on the Saga program, as the other launched in 2021-22, with full implementation only in the winter of 2022.

All district data is from NCES, as available in September, 2022, and has been aggregated by CEMD. In some cases, districts themselves corrected or adjusted a number for us.

Tutoring Program Overview

The Vitals



Model

High-dosage. Participating students receive services at least 3 times a week, for at least a half-hour per session.



Program Type

The program is administered by an **external partner**, Saga Education.



Student Group(s) Prioritized

CPS's STEM office selected 22 participant schools based on a cross-section of data that included both **student math outcomes** (primarily on PSAT/SAT Math tests) and **school capacity** to bring the program in. Within schools, **teachers and school administrators select student participants based on academic need.** Demographic factors are not explicitly considered.



Grades Served & Subjects Covered

The program focuses on **9th and 10th grade math** (Algebra and Geometry), which the district pinpointed as key stumbling blocks to many students' high school success. During the 2021-22 school year, the program served about 2300 students total.



Session Timing

Saga's model embeds all tutoring **within the school day.** At CPS, this is during a dedicated "Math Lab," which is in addition to regular math class.



Delivery Method

Delivery has historically been **in-person, in small groups** (4-5 students), but some CPS schools moved to a hybrid (in-person + virtual) model during the 2021-22 school year. In the upcoming year, all schools will **move to a hybrid model.**

Program Journey

From Decision-Making to Outcomes-Monitoring



Deciding on Tutoring

The tutoring program was launched by CPS in 2011-12 to address stagnant academic growth. The district was seeing early signs of success with the social-emotional learning initiatives it implemented in high schools during this time – in terms of behavioral outcomes and graduation rates – but academic metrics weren't budging. The problem was especially acute for high school math. So in partnership with Urban Labs at the University of Chicago, CPS researched other districts that had improved in this area, and identified high-dosage tutoring as a key potential strategy. In 2012, CPS piloted a tutoring initiative with Saga (then known as Match Education) at Harper High School. This single seed has grown into today's 22-school program.



Setting Requirements

Evidence of effectiveness was and is the heart of CPS's requirements for tutoring. CPS initially selected Saga based on rigorous research of its effects in other districts. The partnership with Saga was designed from the outset as a research partnership, which then expanded incrementally to serve more and more students. As the program has grown, CPS has also made adjustments at several points to meet students' changing needs. This year, for example, Saga couldn't meet CPS's demand for in-person tutors, and proposed a hybrid virtual/in-person model instead. Easterly told us that in order to agree, "we needed assurance and certainty that the quality would not decline, which Saga gave us through data from other districts."



Implementing

Easterly attributes much of CPS's success with implementation to high levels of trust and communication between CPS and Saga. The company is very much a “soup-to-nuts” provider: they bring in their own specialized, evidence-based curriculum, learning platform, tutors, and site directors, who embed within the school staff and community. Mutual trust is essential to success, according to Easterly: “we need to trust that Saga is going to follow through at a high level with quality of service, and Saga needs to trust that we’re going to provide the pathway for them to do the work that they’ve been tasked to do.”



Monitoring Outcomes

CPS examines 4 metrics to assess tutoring effects: the skills-driven progress monitoring that Saga provides; students' perceptions of their own math abilities, as measured by surveys; **students' grades;** and their **growth from the PSAT to the SAT math test.** In the future, CPS plans to add the metric of participating students' persistence into a non-required fourth year of math, which points to a growth in math confidence.

Outcomes from the program have been so strong that CPS made the addition of another, larger-scale tutoring program a centerpiece of Moving Forward Together, its post-COVID recovery plan. This plan outlines how the district will use federal ESSER funds to accelerate student learning through a variety of interventions. As Easterly told us, “One of those interventions, which has shown great outcomes in Chicago, is high-dosage tutoring.” The new program, the CPS Tutor Corps, will serve a much broader range of students, with literacy tutoring for grades K-5 and math tutoring for grades 6-12; and though Saga will continue to provide some services, Chicago community members will serve as tutors so that more students can benefit. The launch of this Corps will bring the total number of CPS students who receive tutoring to 12,000 in 2022-23.

“What would you do differently?”

Top Tip from CPS



FOCUS ON ATTENDANCE.

Easterly told us that the single most significant inhibitor of student success was inconsistent attendance at school — not just for the tutoring period, but for regular classroom instruction. Program data showed a strong correlation between regular student attendance and positive tutoring effects — a signal that other districts implementing tutoring programs should simultaneously focus on improving student attendance over time.