

Policy Brief

High-Impact Tutoring: Intervention for Success

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As New Mexico and other states have grappled with low proficiency rates in reading and mathematics, they have turned to high-impact tutoring as a promising intervention to boost student achievement and improve academic outcomes. This individualized instruction is meant to help students struggling in core academic areas catch up with their peers.

In fiscal year 2025 (FY25), the New Mexico Legislature appropriated \$8.5 million to support the creation and implementation of a statewide high-impact tutoring grant program. In June 2025, the Public Education Department (PED) and the Southwest Outreach Academic Research (SOAR) Evaluation and Policy Center at New Mexico State University completed a program evaluation of grant program recipients.

This brief, as part of a broader panel presentation, will define high-impact tutoring, review recommended design practices, and discuss the history of state support for high-impact tutoring in New Mexico.

What is High-Impact Tutoring?

High-impact tutoring is broadly defined as a learning model consisting of multiple sessions per week where a trained instructor offers academic instruction in either a one-on-one format, or to a group of no more than four students. While high-impact tutoring can in some instances take place after the school day, this academic intervention is distinct from out-of-school time programs.

State Support for High-Impact Tutoring in New Mexico

Legislative Appropriations

In FY25, the New Mexico Legislature adopted a state budget including \$15 million for out-of-school time programs and high-impact tutoring. Of this total appropriation, \$8.5 million was specifically earmarked for high-impact tutoring.

In FY26, the Legislature again appropriated \$15 million for out-of-school time and tutoring. However, the budgetary language for FY26 in the 2025 General Appropriation Act did not mention high-impact tutoring. Instead, \$14 million was earmarked for out-of-school time programming and \$1 million was designated for tutoring in science, technology, mathematics, and engineering and literacy for at-risk students.

In addition to funding provided by the Legislature, PED has used federal elementary and secondary school emergency relief (ESSER) funding to support tutoring initiatives.

History of High-Impact Tutoring in New Mexico

The FY25 PED grant program created to distribute the \$8.5 million legislative appropriation represents a fourth attempt in recent years to launch a state-supported high-impact tutoring effort in New Mexico. This effort diverges from previous attempts by providing funding directly to LEAs to develop tutoring programs.

Implementation challenges ranging from rollout timing and contracting to tutoring scheduling have been recurring barriers to high-impact tutoring in New Mexico.

Key Takeaways

- High-impact tutoring is broadly defined as a learning model consisting of multiple sessions per week where a trained instructor offers academic instruction in either a one-on-one format or to a group of no more than four students (*Page 1*).
- The budgetary language for FY26 in the 2025 General Appropriation Act did not mention high-impact tutoring (*Page 1*).
- In FY25, PED disbursed approximately \$6.82 million in high-impact tutoring funding to 23 awardees (*Page 2*).

In 2022, the state contracted with Paper, a virtual tutoring company, to provide online instruction to elementary and middle school students. The program's format scheduled tutoring sessions for nights and weekends. Citing failure to produce results on engagement, support, or delivery of service, PED terminated this contract in February 2023.

A request for proposals was issued by PED in 2023 to identify vendors to provide in-person or virtual tutoring. Three providers were selected, but the program was canceled prior to launch due to a protest filed by another prospective vendor.

In April 2024, PED rolled out a new high-impact tutoring initiative. According to [reporting](#), five school districts enrolled. The department had a goal of 8,000 participating students but estimated only 2,000 to 3,000 students participated.

PED High-Impact Tutoring Grant Program Criteria

To select recipients of FY25 high-impact tutoring grant awards, PED prioritized FY24 out-of-school time grant awardees. According to the department, this was done in response to cuts to available out-of-school time funding in the FY25 state budget. Of the 27 LEAs awarded out-of-school time funding in FY24, 23 opted in to high-impact tutoring funding in FY25. To receive these funds, LEAs had to commit to implement high-impact tutoring programs and participate in tutoring training.

For FY26, PED is using the \$1 million tutoring appropriation included in the 2025 General Appropriation Act to fund high-impact tutoring initiatives. 45 letters of intent from LEAs were received by the department -- 23 FY25 awardees, 22 new local education agencies (LEAs) -- totaling nearly \$22 million in requested funding. Allocation priority is as follows:

- First priority for FY25 high-impact tutoring grant recipients;
- Second priority to FY25 PED high-impact middle school math and literacy program participants; and
- Third priority to all other applicants.

Additionally, the department is considering three other factors in their decision making process:

- Applicants implementing programming in rural and small schools;
- Cost of program per student; and
- Number of students served.

To receive funding, LEAs must sign an assurance defining high-impact tutoring and agree to the following set of additional assurances:

- Participation in the PED high-impact tutoring [multi-layered systems of support](#) embedded coach training;
- Use of specific course codes to create program courses, enroll students, and take attendance;
- Creation of district and/or school-level professional learning community to review student and school data to assess program effectiveness;
- Inclusion of a proposed budget and program plan to spend all allocated funds;
- Participation in a PED mid-year check-in meeting to report program and budget progress;
- Participation in a site visit at the request of PED;
- Presentation of a 10-minute program success story at the end of FY26; and
- Participation in any survey, interview, or data collection for program evaluation.

PED Grant Program

In FY25, PED disbursed approximately \$6.82 million of the \$8.5 million in FY25 high-impact tutoring funding to 23 awardees. \$1 million was sent to New Mexico State University through an intergovernmental agreement. The

remainder was used for PED administrative functions. The complete list of awardees, as well as their respective awards, are shown in **Appendix A: PED High-Impact Tutoring Grant Recipients**.

Design Principles of High-Impact Tutoring

In 2021, [EdResearch for Action](#), a joint initiative between the Annenberg Institute at Brown University and Results for America, a nonprofit data firm, published a [brief](#) outlining 10 design principles educators and policymakers should consider for effective high-impact tutoring programs:

Frequency. The recommended dosage for effective tutoring programs is at least three tutoring sessions per week, typically lasting 30 to 60 minutes each. Shorter sessions at a greater frequency, such as 20 minutes five times a week, may be more beneficial for younger students. Tutoring programs should last for at least 10 weeks for best results. In total, a tutoring program should involve 50 hours of instruction over a 36-week period to be considered high-impact.

Alternatively, a more sustained intervention consisting of a weeklong program during school vacation breaks could be considered.

Group Size. Tutoring is intended to provide more individualized instruction for students struggling with core academic subjects. To that end, EdResearch for Action’s design principles recommend one-on-one tutoring as the optimal model. However, tutoring can be effective for groups of up to three or four students.

Personnel. Tutors do not necessarily need to be licensed teachers, though teachers tend to be the most effective tutors. A tutoring program may still produce learning gains with volunteer tutors or college students, so long as they are adequately trained. Training should include subject examinations, pedagogy, cultural competency, and social emotional learning, among other skills.

Focus. Tutoring has been found to be effective across all kindergarten through 12th grade levels. Most research has examined literacy tutoring for elementary students. For secondary students, there is evidence math tutoring may be more effective.

Measurement. To allow tutors to adjust instruction to meet student needs over the course of the program, as well as ensure continued implementation success, high-impact tutoring programs should incorporate data collection and reporting. This data collection can include formative assessments of student achievement and formal evaluations of program effectiveness.

Relationships. The most effective tutoring programs ensure students work with the same instructor over time. This can allow for the development of positive instructor-student relationships. Positive relationships between teachers and their students have been shown to benefit students both academically and socially.

Curriculum. High-impact tutoring programs should incorporate high-quality instructional materials in alignment with grade-level instruction students would receive in their regular classroom.

Scheduling. A 2020 [meta-analysis](#) of tutoring programs found learning gains for students were most pronounced when sessions were held during the school day or immediately after school ends. This scheduling approach can boost student participation in programs, whereas relying on outside providers may result in lower attendance at tutoring sessions.

Delivery Mode. To date, most scholarly research on the effectiveness of high-impact tutoring has been focused on in-person instruction. There is growing research on the effectiveness of online tutoring, which can be attractive due to lower costs than in-person tutoring.

Prioritization. Several student enrollment models have had positive outcomes for participants. EdResearch for Action highlights three methods for prioritization of students for tutoring:

- **Need-driven:** This type of program is the most studied in evaluations of tutoring effectiveness. In need-driven programs, children who fall beneath a certain threshold of proficiency in a given subject are identified and provided with individualized, intensive tutoring.
- **Curriculum-driven:** This model targets tutoring interventions based on identified critical steps in a child’s academic development. Interventions coincide with potential learning disruptions (such as the [transition to middle school](#)).

- **Universal:** In universal models, an entire school or grade-level receives tutoring support, regardless of individual student performance. While this model could potentially reduce stigmatization of students requiring additional academic support, universal programs tend to be more costly.

PED FY26 High-Impact Tutoring Definition

PED's Intent to Apply instructions for the FY26 high-impact tutoring grant requires grant applicants to provide an assurance they understand the essential components of high-impact tutoring. PED's assurance outlines eight design principles:

- Targeted or intensive instructional supports using high-quality instructional materials aligned to adopted standards in a cohesive scope and sequence;
- Tutoring is provided by well-trained instructors who demonstrate mastery in the science of reading and literacy instruction and/or math instruction for K-12 students;
- Programs provide responsive supports to students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- Student grouping and tutor assignments are consistent over the program's duration to encourage positive tutor-student relationships;
- Programs maintain a maximum 4:1 student-to-tutor ratio per session;
- Scheduling for programs offers a minimum of 90 minutes of exposure per week for a minimum of 14 weeks;
- Tutoring uses ongoing, balanced assessments to help tutor tailor instruction during sessions; and
- Tutoring interventions must demonstrate cohesion with the student's core instructional environment.

Overall, the design principles included in PED's definition of high-impact tutoring align with national best practices discussed in this brief. The only major differences between the EdResearch for Action design principles and PED's guidance are the department's focus on developing culturally and linguistically responsive supports for students and minimum program length of 14 weeks (up from 10 weeks in the national design principles). Beyond the providing of assurances and the possibility of a site visit at PED's request, it is unclear how the department will ensure compliance with the design principles included in the Intent to Apply instructions.

Evidence for High-Impact Tutoring

A strong body of evidence supports high-impact tutoring as an effective instructional intervention, though most research has focused on elementary school. A [2020 review and meta-analysis](#) of 96 randomized evaluations found tutoring led to substantial growth, quantified as an overall effect size of 0.37 standard deviations (SD), for students receiving the intervention. The vast majority of included studies focused on elementary school, with only 7 percent including tutoring for middle and high school students.

An [evidence review](#) from the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) research center, a global research organization focused on reducing poverty through policies rooted in scientific evidence, expressed these findings as rough percentile changes, as shown in **Table 1: J-PAL Tutoring Effect Size Interpretation**. The most significant improvements came from teacher-led tutoring (growth from the 50th to the 70th percentile), but researchers observed positive outcomes could for programs led by paraprofessionals (50th to 66th) or parents and volunteers (50th to 58th). The overall

Table 1: J-PAL Tutoring Effect Size Interpretation

Effect Size	Interpretation
0.10 SD	50th to 54th percentile
0.20 SD	50th to 58th percentile
0.30 SD	50th to 62nd percentile
0.40 SD	50th to 66th percentile
*0.50 SD	*50th to 70th percentile

*NOTE: LESC staff estimate

Source: J-PAL

observed effect size of 0.37 SD translates to growth from the 50th percentile to nearly the 66th percentile.

In terms of scheduling, tutoring that occurred during the school day had almost double the effect size (0.4 SD) of after-school tutoring (0.21 SD). However, just 18 percent of the reviewed studies evaluated after-school programming.

Targeting core subject area tutoring to specific grade levels can be a method to maximize the benefits of tutoring. According to the meta-analysis, literacy programs have large benefits for students in preschool and kindergarten (0.5 SD). Once a student enters first grade, the effect size of literacy tutoring decreases to 0.43 SD before leveling out at 0.22 SD in grades two through five.

In contrast, math tutoring's effectiveness increased along with grade level. First grade math tutoring had an effect size of 0.38 SD, but that effect size grew to 0.44 SD for students in grades two through five.

In addition to its effectiveness for individual student growth, there is evidence high-impact tutoring is still effective even at larger scales. Fifteen of the studies included in the 2020 meta-analysis had student sample sizes between 400 and 7,000 students and produced an average effect size of 0.25 SD.

Though research into the broad effectiveness of tutoring for higher grade levels is relatively limited, specific programs have shown promising results, particularly in math. For example, preliminary findings from a [study](#) of New Mexico's virtual tutoring program in collaboration with nonprofit online tutoring provider Saga Education and the University of Chicago's Personalized Learning Initiative showed positive results for participating students. Though the delivery of instruction is virtual, this model does involve an in-person proctor. According to the June 2025 [brief](#) on the program, participating students in the virtual middle school math tutoring program learned approximately 38 percent more math than their non-tutored peers over the course of the 2023-2024 school year.

Additionally, a 2015 [evaluation](#) of a math tutoring program for ninth and 10th grade students in 12 Chicago schools indicated tutoring increased math achievement test scores between 0.19 to 0.31 SD and increased math grades by 0.5 SD.

Policy Considerations and Recommendations

National research indicates high-impact tutoring, if implemented effectively, can produce meaningful learning gains for students across all K-12 grade levels. As the Legislature considers whether to continue investing in high-impact tutoring, particular attention should be paid to the mechanisms used to ensure high-impact tutoring programs supported by state funds are adhering to nationally recognized best practices. Should such an investment be made, PED, school districts, and charter schools must take steps to stand up tutoring programs informed by research to effectively steward the appropriated funds.

The Legislature should...

- Consider whether to include high-impact tutoring as a multi-year initiative of the public education reform fund (PERF) with program components and metrics established prior to implementation.
- Fund out-of-school time and high-impact tutoring as separate line items in the General Appropriation Act.

The Public Education Department should...

- Develop a framework of required design principles of high-impact tutoring as a condition of receipt of state grant funding.
- Conduct mid-year and end-of-year inspections of grant-funded programs to ensure compliance with required design principles.
- Require regular reporting by awardees of student performance and engagement as a condition of grant receipt.

School Districts and Charter Schools should...

- Ensure high-impact tutoring programs align with departmental guidance and best practices.
- Institute a rolling data collection process to continually assess instruction and track student growth.
- Provide student-level data reports to PED at the beginning, midpoint, and conclusion of tutoring to allow for evaluation of program effectiveness.

Appendix A: PED High-Impact Tutoring Grant Recipients

Fiscal Year 2025

Award Recipient	County	Award Amount
Albuquerque Public Schools	Bernalillo	\$200,000
Health Leadership High School	Bernalillo	\$120,000
Mountain Mahogany Community School	Bernalillo	\$105,000
Native American Community Academy	Bernalillo	\$47,500
Robert F. Kennedy Charter School	Bernalillo	\$30,000
Siembra Leadership High School	Bernalillo	\$87,500
Mosaic Academy Charter	San Juan	\$48,000
Central Consolidated Schools	San Juan	\$1,925,000
Cuba Independent Schools	Sandoval	\$150,000
Deming Public Schools	Luna	\$750,000
Los Lunas Public Schools	Valencia	\$1,600,000
Peñasco Independent Schools	Taos, Rio Arriba	\$90,000
Ruidoso Municipal Schools	Lincoln	\$206,000
Santa Fe Public Schools	Santa Fe	\$120,000
Taos Municipal Charter School	Taos	\$15,000
ACES Technical Charter School	Bernalillo	\$30,000
Albuquerque Sign Language Academy (The)	Bernalillo	\$27,500
Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School	Bernalillo	\$375,000
Hózhó Academy	McKinley	\$350,000
Mission Achievement and Success Charter School	Bernalillo	\$300,000
Monte del Sol Charter School	Santa Fe	\$75,000
Taos Academy	Taos	\$125,000
Eastern NM University Ruidoso	Lincoln	\$25,000
TOTAL		\$6,801,500

Source: PED