



TO: The Biden Administration
FROM: FutureEd
RE: A Blueprint for a National Student Tutoring Initiative
DATE: January 19, 2021

A Blueprint for a National Student Tutoring Initiative

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the deep racial and socio-economic disparities that keep many of our most vulnerable students from succeeding in school. Tutoring is among the most effective interventions we can deploy to address the problem. The *average effect* of high-quality tutoring programs on academic achievement is larger than roughly 85 percent of other education interventions and equivalent to moving a student at the 35th percentile of the achievement distribution to the 50th.

But tutoring is broadly available only to those who can afford it.

FutureEd urges the Biden Administration to provide the funding and infrastructure necessary to integrate high-dosage tutoring into the public school system. Drawing on [an analysis](#) by FutureEd Research Director Matthew Kraft of Brown University and his Brown colleague Grace Falken, we envision schools extending the K-12 school year for students by 100 hours, or 30 minutes a day, and using this additional time to accelerate students' learning in reading and math with tutors working with two to four students.

To make this possible at scale, we suggest a tiered structure: high school students tutor elementary school students as an elective course; college students tutor middle school students as a federal work-study job; and recent college graduates tutor high school students through national service programs, such as AmeriCorps. School districts that choose to participate would have autonomy to tailor their programs to local needs.

The tutoring proposal dovetails with several Biden Administration goals, including reducing educational disparities, expanding support for Title I schools, increasing college affordability, and developing a more diverse teaching workforce. Beyond academic support, tutoring creates the opportunity for students to develop positive, caring relationships with older peers who can serve as mentors, supports social-emotional development and enhances attachment to and attendance at school.

Kraft and Falken estimate that a program targeting all K-12 students in the nation's 20,000 lowest-performing schools would cost the federal government about \$10 billion annually. Expanding tutoring across all K-8 schools with high concentrations of students from low-income backgrounds—so-called Title I schools—would cost approximately \$16 billion annually.

We envision the federal government funding the tutoring plan through stimulus legislation and expansions of existing federal programs. Alternatively, the federal government could require states or districts to match a portion of the federal funding, a move that would lower the federal price tag and enhance state and local commitment to the tutoring effort.

Federal Funding

There are several ways federal funding can be used to support a national tutoring program:

- *Utilize Stimulus Funding:* The Biden administration and Congress can lay the foundation for a permanent new public education tutoring infrastructure by allowing state stabilization funds in an economic stimulus package to be targeted to elementary and secondary schools to pay for tutors that can help students recover the learning they've lost during the pandemic.
- *Dedicate New Title I Funds:* President-elect Biden has pledged to triple funding for Title I and to require districts to use these funds to make critical investments. In order to implement a national tutoring initiative, local school districts would need funding for district- and school-level managerial positions, stipends for peer leadership, and IT investments. That support could be provided by using a portion of these new funds.
- *Create a Competitive Grant Program:* The Administration could propose a new competitive grant program to incentivize states and local school districts to invest in a state- or district-wide tutoring initiative.
- *Expand AmeriCorps:* Tutoring all high school students in Title I schools would require a substantial expansion of AmeriCorps of approximately 115,000 new members. The Administration and Congress should fund additional AmeriCorps slots so that tutoring can be provided through partnerships with local and state organizations. However, unlike many AmeriCorps-funded programs that support schools by having Education Corps members serve as teachers' aides and afterschool program coordinators, we envision these corps members working exclusively as full-time tutors during dedicated tutoring classes integrated throughout the school day.

- *Reform the Federal Work-Study Program:* More than 600,000 college students receive work-study grants each year. Expanding the program to support a national tutoring initiative would contribute to the administration's efforts to improve college affordability and would help ensure racial and socio-economic diversity among tutors. Funding for the work-study program should be increased, and the allocation formula should be updated to ensure the aid goes to institutions that enroll and graduate high numbers of Pell students and that the funds are allocated to students with the highest need. The Secretary of Education should allow tutoring across grades and subject areas to be allocated towards an institution's 7 percent community service requirement and provide a 100 percent share of the student's wages.
- *A New Investment:* We envision Congress establishing a National Tutoring Institute (NTI) at the U.S. Education Department or at the Corporation for National and Community Service, in the same way that federal lawmakers created the Institute for Education Sciences through the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. This would provide a centralized federal hub for coordinating local partnerships between states, districts, colleges, and AmeriCorps affiliates as well as reviewing funding applications, collecting implementation data, and commissioning ongoing evaluations. We also envision the NTI working in partnership with an independent organization such as the National Student Support Accelerator at Brown University to develop tutor training resources and instructional materials, provide technical assistance to districts, and support program implementation.

Tutoring is not a silver bullet, but we can think of few educational interventions that present as many potential benefits.

Contact Information

You can reach FutureEd Director Thomas Toch at 202-487-5941 or ttoch@future-ed.org.