COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR GOOD
RESEARCH BRIEF
MARCH 2026

Maryland districts' tutoring programs hold promise. How can they be scaled up?

Kayla Bill, Ditra Backup, Deborah Euzebio, & David Blazar // Maryland Equity Project

Tutoring is a priority for Maryland—for good reason.

Context for Scaling Tutoring under the Blueprint

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Maryland's comprehensive education reform, identifies one-on-one and small group tutoring as a key academic support for K-12 students.[1] School districts are required to provide tutoring interventions for K-3 students identified as needing additional support based on assessment data and for high schoolers identified as needing additional support to meet the state's new College and Career Readiness standard. The Blueprint also identifies tutoring as one of many wraparound services that may be provided by community schools.[2] Research supports this emphasis on tutoring. Ample studies have identified that tutoring increases student learning outcomes, producing some of the largest effects on student outcomes of any educational intervention and having particularly impactful results on achievement for students from low-income backgrounds.[3]

Maryland's 24 school districts were required to describe how they are aligning their practices with state-wide goals in implementation plans submitted to the Accountability and Implementation Board, which oversees Blueprint implementation.[4] The most recent plans were submitted in May 2024. Our research team analyzed all available documents to better understand the characteristics of tutoring programs districts were offering, as well as districts' challenges with and strategies for bringing those programs to scale. This brief highlights promising examples of tutoring programs and strategies for scaling them up.

Most Maryland districts are offering tutoring programs with key design features.

The Promise of District Plans

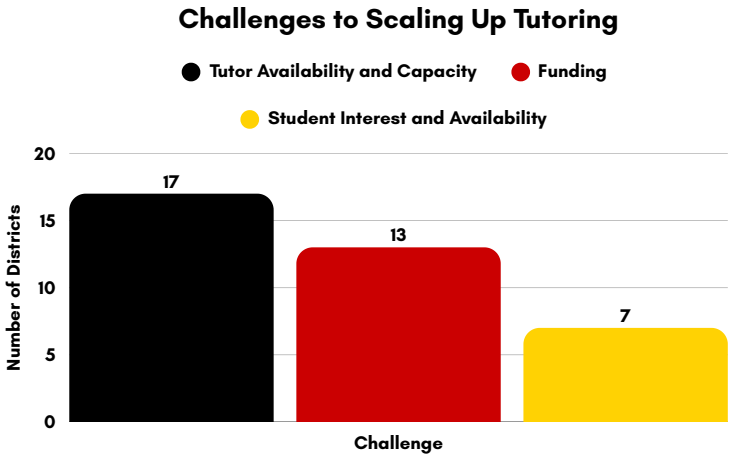
The academic literature not only identifies tutoring as an impactful educational intervention, but also identifies specific features of tutoring programs that are associated with larger positive effects. The most promising programs are offered:

- In person[5]
- By certified teachers or paraprofessionals[6]
- In one-on-one or small group settings[7]
- At least three days per week[8]
- During school hours[9]

Three-quarters of Maryland districts described offering tutoring programs with all of these key design features, while the remaining quarter described offering programs that had three to four of them. Thus, overall, districts are providing tutoring programs with high potential to increase student outcomes.

Scaling up high-quality tutoring programs is proving to be a challenge, but many districts are finding creative solutions.

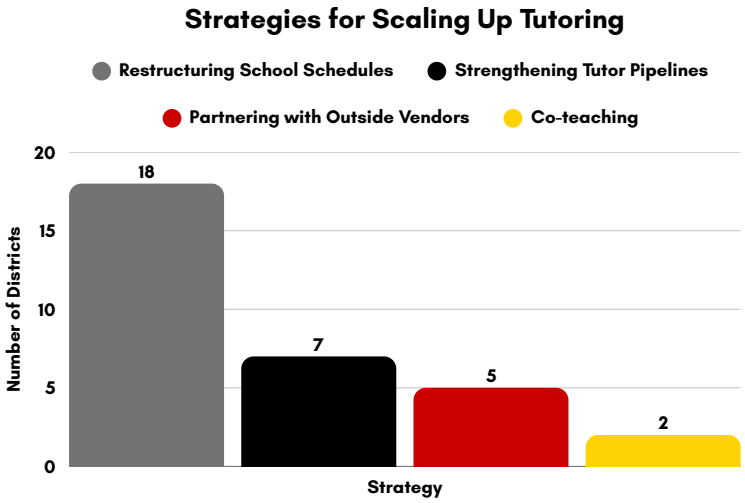
Evidence from Maryland Districts



About this Brief. Our research team reviewed Maryland districts' 2024 Blueprint implementation plans, which were submitted to the Accountability and Implementation Board and are publicly available, to better understand the characteristics of tutoring programs districts were offering, as well as districts' challenges with and strategies for bringing those programs to scale. Comprehensive findings from our analysis are detailed in this slide deck.

While it is encouraging that districts are offering tutoring programs with high-quality features, bringing those programs to scale requires additional, intentional strategies. Recent studies have found that tutoring interventions are less effective when delivered at scale,[10] likely influenced by challenges with funding, staffing, and student engagement.[11] Indeed, 20 Maryland districts noted at least one challenge with scaling up tutoring, with the most common issues being the availability and capacity of tutors and, relatedly, funding.

But many districts also described navigating these challenges with promising scale-up strategies. Twenty Maryland districts described at least one strategy that was being (or would be) employed to scale up tutoring—most frequently, restructuring school schedules to make time for tutoring during the school day and strengthening tutor pipelines.



These strategies are generally aligned with the challenges districts identified, as well as with guidance from the academic literature, which suggests that promising scale-up strategies include:[12]

- Offering a combination of key design features
- Increasing buy-in among staff
- Rethinking school schedules
- Pursuing multiple funding sources

As previously noted, all districts are offering a combination of key design features, and many are engaging in other promising strategies as well. But the detail in which districts described how, exactly, they were implementing those strategies, varied. While general evidence that districts are engaging in the aforementioned strategies is encouraging, the extent to which these strategies will support the successful scale-up of tutoring programs heavily depends on the intricacies of implementation. In other words, the devil is in the details. We identified some instances where districts described how they were implementing scale-up strategies in detail. We highlight these examples below, in an effort to illuminate how these evidence-based strategies could look in practice.

Modifying School Schedules in Frederick County

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) is one of several districts that described modifying school schedules to allow time for tutoring. FCPS discussed "reviewing and revamping" class schedules at elementary, middle, and high school levels, including lengthening current class periods. Modifications at each school level are being "vetted" by workgroups and piloted in select schools before they are implemented across the district.

Strengthening Tutor Pipelines in Worcester County

Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) noted several strategies to build a sustainable pipeline of tutors. First, the district described targeting (and successfully recruiting) retired teachers to support tutoring at elementary and middle school levels. Second, the district described training high schoolers enrolled in an introductory education course to tutor small groups of elementary school students. The latter strategy may support another key goal of the Blueprint—expanding the teacher workforce through Grow-Your-Own programs

Partnering with Local Colleges to Expand Tutoring Services in Montgomery County

Similar to WCPS, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) discussed training high schoolers enrolled in the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) program to serve as tutors—and working with TAM coordinators to create a structure that allowed those students to earn internship credit for tutoring. But MCPS also described targeting another potential pipeline of tutors: college students. The district discussed establishing partnerships with local colleges and universities to recruit and hire students eligible for Federal Work Study to provide tutoring services to elementary school students.

Although these approaches to scaling up tutoring programs may not suit the context, structure, and resources of every Maryland district, they offer helpful examples of how districts could turn promising strategies into practice.

Endnotes

[1] Maryland General Assembly (2020). House Bill 1300. Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Implementation.

Accountability and Implementation Board (2024). *Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Comprehensive implementation plan.*

[2] Maryland General Assembly (2020)

[3] Dietrichson, J., Bøg, M., Filges, T., & Jørgenson, A. K. (2017). Academic interventions for elementary and middle school students with low socioeconomic status: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(2), 243-282.

Fryer, R. G. (2017). The production of human capital in developed countries: Evidence from 196 randomized field experiments. *Handbook of Field Experiments, Vol. 2*, 95-322.

Kraft, M. A., Scheuler, B. E., & Falken, G. (2024). What impacts should we expect from tutoring at scale? EdWorkingPapers.

Nickow, A., Oreopoulos, P., & Quan, V. (2024). The promise of tutoring for preK–12 learning: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. *American Educational Research Journal, 61*(1), 74-107.

Robinson, C. D., Kraft, M. A., Loeb, S., & Schueler, B. E. (2021). *Accelerating student learning with high-dosage tutoring.* EdResearch for Recovery.

[4] Accountability and Implementation Board. (n.d.). *About the Accountability and Implementation Board.* Maryland State Government.

[5] Kraft et al. (2024)

[6] Nickow et al. (2024)

[7] Kraft et al. (2024); Nickow et al. (2024)

[8] Nickow et al. (2024)

[9] Kraft et al. (2024); Nickow et al. (2024)

[10] Kraft et al. (2024)

[11] Makori, A., Burch, P., & Loeb, S. (2024). Scaling high-impact tutoring: School level perspectives on implementation challenges and strategies. EdWorkingPapers.

Robinson, C. D., Bisht, B., & Loeb, S. (2025). The inequity of opt-in educational resources and an intervention to increase equitable access. EdWorkingPapers.

Robinson et al. (2021)

[12] Cohen, L. (2024). *Learning curve: Lessons from the tutoring revolution in public education.* FutureEd.

Kraft et al. (2024)