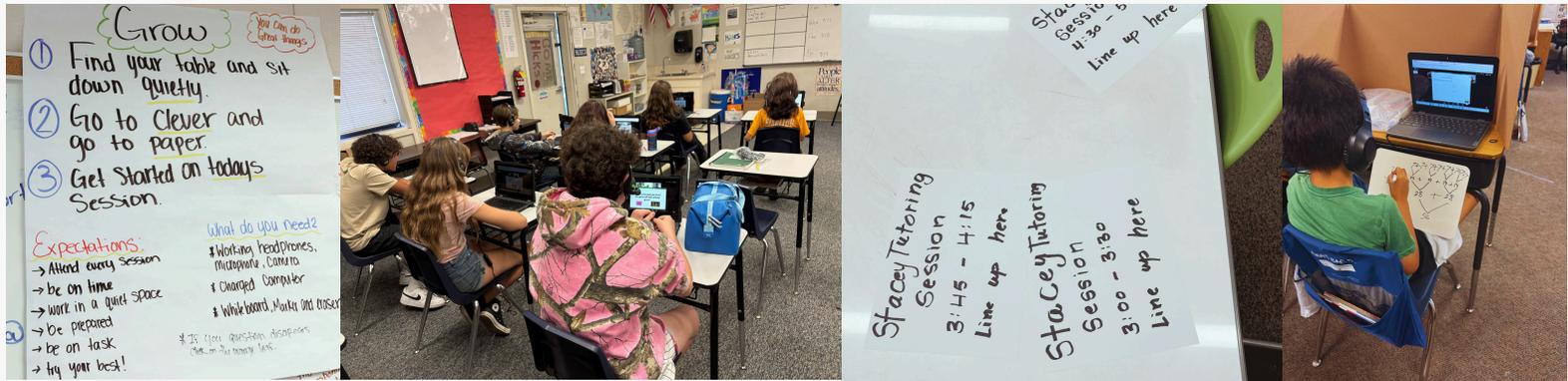PAPER

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HIGH IMPACT TUTORING (HIT) FAQ GUIDE

Why High Impact Tutoring Emerged and What It Takes to Do It Well

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INSTRUCTURE
LEVEL 3 ESSA
2025

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Why High Impact Tutoring (HIT) Matters Now

Districts face increased pressure to accelerate learning with fewer resources—and many are still unwinding the effects of well-meant but low-impact digital interventions. Schools were flooded with dashboards and adaptive tools that promised scale and insights but often delivered low usage, shallow data, and extra work for educators.

High-impact tutoring (HIT) stands out because it restores what automation replaced: real connection, instructional continuity, and accountable learning moments that actually move achievement.

But the quality of HIT programs varies widely. This guide offers a clear, objective structure districts can use to evaluate providers and make confident, defensible investments grounded in evidence—not promises.

What HIT is. What HIT isn't.

High impact tutoring includes:

- Consistent tutor-student sessions
- Small groups (1:1–4:1)
- At least 3 sessions per week, at least 30 minutes each
- Alignment to district pacing and classroom instruction
- Structured lessons and ongoing progress monitoring
- Integration into the school day whenever possible

High impact tutoring is NOT:

- Homework help or ad hoc support
- Fully automated or software-only interventions
- Rotating tutors with inconsistent delivery
- One-size-fits-all curriculum unaligned to district instruction

Why is High Impact Tutoring Gaining Poularity?

Losing — and Rebuilding — Instructional Balance

For the last decade, academic intervention swung hard toward digital tools.

Dashboards promised scale. Adaptive software promised personalization. Districts invested with urgency (and good intent).

What followed was an **unintended trade-off.** Usage dropped. Teachers carried more tools but less clarity. Students cycled through interventions without consistent instruction or relationships.

High impact tutoring (HIT) emerged as a correction—not a rejection of technology, but a return to what actually moves learning: consistent human instruction, designed to work at scale inside real schools.

FAQs: HIT Emergence

"Why did high impact tutoring emerge now?"

Digital tools scaled access and data, but often failed to deliver consistent instruction tied to classroom learning. High-impact tutoring re-emerged to restore instructional fidelity.

"What changed in the research that elevated HIT specifically?"

Post-pandemic research clarified that how tutoring is delivered matters as much as whether it's delivered. Studies and frameworks (including those synthesized by groups like the National Student Support Accelerator) showed that frequency, tutor consistency, curriculum alignment, and progress monitoring are the conditions under which tutoring reliably produces results.

"Why didn't traditional tutoring meet this need before?"

Traditional tutoring worked academically, but not operationally. It was difficult to staff, hard to schedule during the school day, expensive to sustain, and inconsistent across sites. HIT emerged once districts could combine research-backed tutoring practices with delivery models that actually fit real school systems.

"Is high impact tutoring just a rejection of edtech?"

No. HIT reflects a recalibration, not a backlash. Districts didn't abandon technology—they learned its limits. HIT uses technology to enable scale and coordination, while keeping instruction human, accountable, and responsive to student needs.

Where are the Challenges of Traditional Tutoring?

Sustaining Tutoring Is Harder Than Starting It

When well run, tutoring can be one of the most effective supports for students who need it most.

As districts expand these efforts, often by growing in-house capacity or reallocating staff, a common challenge emerges. What works well in individual schools or short cycles becomes harder to sustain consistently across schedules, semesters, and sites. Staffing changes, competing priorities, and uneven conditions can affect delivery over time.

High impact tutoring emerged to support that reality. Not as a replacement for strong local efforts, but as **a way to preserve consistency and instructional momentum** as programs grow.

FAQs: In-House Tutoring

"How are schools currently investing in homegrown tutoring?"

Most schools are expanding intervention blocks, reallocating instructional aides or specialists, hiring part-time tutors, or asking teachers to take on additional tutoring responsibilities before, during, or after the school day. Some are even brining in family volunteers to support ELA efforts in earlier grades specifically.

"What challenges tend to emerge as these programs grow?"

As programs expand, schools often face scheduling conflicts, staff turnover, uneven implementation across sites, and difficulty maintaining the same experience for all students.

"Where do in-house tutoring models tend to work best?"

In-house tutoring is most effective as Tier 1 or supplemental support—homework help, ad hoc assistance, or short-term reinforcement tied to classroom instruction.
When schools use in-house tutoring for Tier 2 intervention, it can move the needle if they're able to maintain strong relational and instructional continuity. Without that consistency over time, impact tends to vary.

"How does high-impact tutoring support consistency at scale?"

High-impact tutoring is designed with structure around frequency, tutor continuity, group size, and instructional alignment—so quality doesn't depend on local conditions or individual availability.

What Makes Tutoring "High-Impact"?

Protecting Instructional and Relational Continuity

High-impact tutoring is designed to protect what learning depends on most: continuity.

When students work with the same tutor, on aligned content, at a predictable cadence, instruction compounds instead of restarting each session. Relationships deepen, expectations stay clear, and learning builds week over week.

Without that instructional and relational continuity, tutoring becomes episodic—helpful in moments, but difficult to sustain. High-impact tutoring **exists to make consistency the default**, not the exception.

FAQs: HIT Specifics

"What does high impact tutoring look like in practice?"

HIT is most often delivered live and virtually, inside the classroom. Students use existing devices (typically Chromebooks and headphones) and work with a remote tutor while remaining part of the school day. This model minimizes disruption, improves attendance, and makes consistent scheduling possible.

"What is the recommended dosage and delivery model for HIT?"

HIT is instruction-first support that extends classroom teaching through live, small-group instruction, typically delivered three times per week in 8–12 week cycles. This frequency allows instruction to build and compound, rather than reset each session.

"Why is having the same tutor so important?"

Tutor consistency enables relational continuity. When students work with the same tutor over time, sessions build on prior learning instead of re-diagnosing needs. This typically requires tutors who are part of a managed workforce—not independent contractors—so sessions remain consistent and aligned over the full cycle.

How does curriculum fit into high impact tutoring?

Instructional continuity is critical. HIT sessions are aligned to classroom curriculum, pacing, and standards, so tutoring reinforces—not replaces—core instruction.

From Understanding HIT to Selecting a HIT Vendor

Learn to tell the difference between programs that deliver on the model and those that borrow the language without the structure

Not all tutoring labeled "high impact" is designed the same way. Differences in tutor staffing, scheduling, instructional alignment, evidence, and implementation support can dramatically affect results. For district leaders under budget and accountability pressure, knowing what to ask matters as much as knowing what to adopt.

The guide includes:

- The 5 criteria districts should use when evaluating HIT providers

- A vendor evaluation checklist focused on evidence, tutor models, and implementation

- Clear guidance on what to look for — and what to watch out for

Vendor Evaluation Form
Questions to ask when evaluating high-impact tutoring programs

Evidence & Validation

Do you have ESSA-aligned evidence speci your high-impact tutoring program?

Has this tutoring program been validated third-party research organization (e.g., NS university partners)?

Has your organization published any findi reviewed or otherwise, on student outcom this program?

Tutor Model & Staffing

Do you use independent contractors (ICs) employees, or a mix for your high-impact

What percentage of sessions are delivered same tutor for each student group over a

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HIGH-IMPACT TUTORING (HIT) BUYER'S GUIDE

What to look for (and look out for) when choosing a HIT provider, vendor evaluation form, FAQ's and more.

Explore the <u>High-Impact Tutoring Buyer's Guide</u>

A practical companion for leaders moving from interest to evaluation.

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