

Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors

How a Massachusetts Charter School Bridges Achievement Gaps

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Contents

Introduction	1
Match Corps: A New Approach to Tutoring	2
Beyond Match: Growing Tutor Corps for National Impact	6
Conclusions and Recommendations	10
About the Author	12
Endnotes	13

■ **Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors**

Introduction

Now in its 13th year of operation, Match Charter Public High School is a public education success story in Boston and beyond. By the time Match was six years old, the US Department of Education (USDOE) had already cited it as one of the eight best charter high schools in the nation for closing the achievement gap.¹ In 2008, Newsweek ranked Match 25th in its list of 1400 high schools across the nation. *US News & World Report* ranked it 99th.² Finally, in each year between 2008 and 2012, Match High School received the prestigious EPIC Award, granted by the USDOE and New Leaders for New Schools, which recognizes urban districts and charter schools “driving the highest achievement gains in students” from year to year.³ These awards were accompanied by national media attention, with outlets from ABC News to the Washington Post highlighting the school’s success.⁴

Though impressive on their own, the accolades that Match has received and the accomplishments that have earned the school such recognition are even more impressive in light of the population of students that Match serves: In the 2012-2013 school year, 76.3 percent of Match High School’s student population was classified as low-income, 93.3 percent were black or Hispanic, and 19.5 percent of students spoke a first language other than English.⁵ These statistics are one of the reasons Match has received such attention. According to conventional wisdom, the students Match serves struggle to succeed in public schools—they are victims of the achievement gap. To be sure, many Match students require intensive remediation and ‘catch up’ upon arrival. The difference is that, unlike too many schools, Match succeeds at helping these students catch up, get ahead, and go on to college. Simply put, Match is

proving that the achievement gap can be narrowed and even closed.

While there is no “magic bullet” that can explain Match’s success, many point to a unique feature of the school: a built in corps of highly educated tutors who live on the school premises and provide students with intense and intentional academic support throughout the school day. This group is known as the Match Corps. Different from traditional notions of tutoring, the Match Corps is not an ‘add on’ service, nor are tutors mere ‘teacher helpers.’ Instead, tutors are integral to the school day and to students’ academic experience. They are accountable for student learning, they form strong and lasting relationships with students and families, and they are known to all members of the Match community, from full-time teachers to administrators.⁶

Results from the Match Corps model are perceived to be so powerful that many other schools and districts are adopting it. In addition to installing tutor corps in Match Education’s two new Massachusetts schools (Match Middle School and Match Community Day), Match has helped other charter and traditional district schools nationwide in places such as Chicago, Newark, New Jersey, Houston, TX, and Lawrence, MA adapt its model to their needs.

The pages that follow describe the history and impact of Match Corps in an attempt to capture this important educational innovation. This paper raises and answers questions about why Match’s tutoring models are so uncommonly effective and what that means for their potential impact on education beyond Match and beyond Boston. Finally, this work ends with recommendations for what policymakers and others should learn from Match, which has changed the lives

of many students and stands to impact perceptions of what really makes a difference in schools.

Match Corps: A New Approach to Tutoring

In the 2002-2003 school year, only two years after it opened, Match High School was emerging as successful. As Alan Safran, the school's former executive director who is now president of Match Tutors, puts it: "the school was getting good results, performing on par with other high-performing area charters, but we needed to go from 'good to great.'"⁷ Central to the administration's concern was the school's college success rate. Before even graduating its first class, school leaders were confident that students' high school exit examination (MCAS) results would be strong. They knew, however, that MCAS success does not directly translate to college entrance or, more importantly, to earning a college degree. (Indeed, a 2011 study found that even the renowned national charter school management organization KIPP was only seeing 33 percent of its students go on to receive college degrees, and this percentage compares favorably to the overall college completion rate in the United States).⁸ At the time Match leaders only knew that their students arrived at ninth grade with roughly a 5-10 percent chance of attaining a college degree (these data were based on student demographic background). They wondered what it would take to bolster that chance to 50 percent or more.⁹

Match founder Michael Goldstein thought tutoring might be "what it takes," but he wasn't interested in traditional tutoring models in which volunteers from all walks of life donate time, usually after school, to help students with homework. Though Goldstein saw value in this model, the value didn't

necessarily derive from increased student achievement. Somewhat counter intuitively, research shows mixed results as to whether tutoring, as traditionally conceived, leads to academic gains.¹⁰

In 2002 Match had experimented with "high dosage" tutoring with a small set of students in ninth grade math. With help from Harvard statistician Chris Avery, Match analyzed the results for this subset of students; they were dramatic. Those who received tutoring grew substantially more than their counterparts and their math class grades grew substantially as well.¹¹

Excited about the success of its experiment, Match created a model for hiring dozens of college students—"work study" tutors—for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. A typical sophomore received eight hours per week of tutoring. The tutors were paid \$15 an hour, on average, but Match paid roughly \$4 per hour of that; the rest was federal subsidy. Later, Match teacher Mark Destler went on to scale this particular approach to high-dosage tutoring, founding a nonprofit called Tutors For All, which serves several schools in Greater Boston.¹²

Meanwhile Goldstein wanted to know: "Is there any way to cost-effectively deliver very high-dosage tutoring to all students, not just Match sophomores?" To answer this question, Goldstein knew the organization would need full-time tutors, but he was not sure how to pay for them. He wondered, "Can we create something that is similar to Americorps?" Essentially, Goldstein envisioned a program with full-time volunteers who committed to one year with Match and worked for a small stipend. The difference between his vision and Americorps, however, was that Match volunteers would be singularly focused (more than most AmeriCorps programs)

■ **Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors**

on driving student achievement up in a measurable way.¹³

Goldstein also envisioned that the program could be similar to Teach for America (TFA) in its appeal to elite college grads, but different from TFA in that it could generate positive impact from day one, by putting the 22-year-old in charge of two students, rather than 20 or more. Perhaps most importantly, Goldstein knew that his tutors would have to be highly trained, integrated into the life of the school, and have ‘high-touch’ with students (meaning that they would be present throughout the school day) if they were to be effective. Effective tutors, he thought, would be able to build positive and consistent relationships that would not only enhance academics but also the overall academic experience for students and their families.¹⁴

While it seemed Match was on to something, these questions and several others had to be answered for the tutor corps program to be implemented at scale: What was the ideal tutor/student ratio? How would the tutors be trained and how would they be held accountable for student learning? Finally, Match would have to come up with a way to pay for the growth of the tutor corps. For tutoring to be an integral part of the school day, tutors would need to be full-time employees of the school.

Things fell into place. The Board of Trustees approved the creation of the “Match Corps,” and Match recruited a founding director, Kamala Saxton. In order to make the idea of a paid year of service attractive to graduates from the nation’s top colleges and universities, the school needed to provide housing for tutors who couldn’t otherwise afford to live in Boston on their small stipends (the 2013-2014 stipend is \$14,300).¹⁵ So the administration raised funds from foundations

and individuals and turned the top floor of the school into a dormitory for the tutor corps. Having tutors living on site had a number of benefits, not least of which was that the school could build its schedule around tutoring—every Match student would have two hours of tutoring each day, which meant that tutors were working throughout the day and could continue to work with students after school, as needed. An Americorps grant covered some of the stipends.¹⁶

Finding the right tutor-to-student ratio was another matter all together. Explains Alan Safran: “a one-to-one ratio may seem desirable, but that means that when a student is doing work, the adult is doing nothing. With a 1 to 3 ratio, the adult might be playing defense. One-to-two, we’ve found, is the optimal use of adult time and it is also great for kids. While one student is working, the tutor can engage the other student. Also, with a one-to-two ratio, if you train the tutor and get it right, you can have the kids engage, compete with, and teach each other.”¹⁷ Founder Mike Goldstein describes the benefit of a one teacher to two student ratio another way. Comparing the act of tutoring to the act of teaching, he notes: “working with two students at a time takes the classroom management issue off of the table.”¹⁸

This is not to suggest that Match tutors aren’t highly trained in how to ‘manage’ students. They are. Prior to the start of school, tutors receive two weeks of intensive training. They learn about everything from strategies for teaching math and English to strategies for working with English language learners. Notes one former tutor, Annie Pinnell, “there is a necessary amount of sitting and listening—there are things you have to learn.” The two-week session is not all about “sitting and listening,” however. During this time tutors also perform simulations with

one another and with Match tutor corps administrators. They learn how to handle situations in which students might do “the weirdest things,” and they learn how to handle another major tutor responsibility: communicating effectively with parents.¹⁹

Table 1: Match Corps Profile, 2013-2014

Total Number of Applications Received (nearly 600 universities represented)	Boston: 1347 Lawrence: 407 Chicago: 440 No Preference: 49 TOTAL: 2242
Percent of Applicants Accepted	53%
Average SAT score of Hires	1989/2400
Average GPA of Hires	3.5

Every Match tutor is charged with calling parents at least once a week to report on student activities, behaviors, and progress. In fact, one might say that tutors are assigned to families rather than students. Every former Match tutor interviewed for this paper mentioned the importance and power of forging family relationships. Notes Pinnell, the tutor-parent relationship is incredibly important, “because kids come to know that parents and tutors are on the same team.” Furthermore, the tutor-parent relationship empowers parents to continue the teaching at home: “knowing what we are working on at school allows parents to emphasize the same things at home—kids get a double dose of learning, there is a consistency there that is really important.”²⁰

Of course, as with teaching, much of a tutor’s training takes place on the job, and once on the job, Match corps members receive academic content support from the teachers at the school who design the content, along with constant

feedback from administrators on how that it is being delivered. Once a week, tutors have “practice and planning time” where teachers give them insight into content and lesson plans and can raise concerns about supports that individual students might require. The same teachers might also weigh in with instructional feedback for tutors, based on what they are seeing in the classroom.²¹

But communication with and feedback from teachers is only part of a more comprehensive tutor accountability system. The feedback loop continues with a daily survey that all corps members take. The survey asks tutors to comment upon every period of their day: how it went, whether they thought tutoring sessions were productive, and any challenges they might have faced. Considering corps members’ answers to these surveys and drawing upon their own observations, corps directors then provide specific feedback to every tutor on a weekly basis.²²

According to former corps member, and current Match teacher John Bachner, the feedback tutors receive is targeted toward “execution and delivery of [academic] content and management of students.”²³ As described by Bachner, Pinnell, and others, the feedback is always direct and actionable, given so corps members will know exactly why and how to adjust their practice.

Indeed, the ability to receive and implement feedback is such an important part of being a Match tutor that it is part of the application screening process, which includes asking interviewees to participate in a mock tutorial.²⁴ Match administrators do not expect candidates to execute a flawless tutorial session. However, when they purposefully provide feedback on how the session went, a candidate who does not take feedback well is unlikely to be invited to join the corps.

■ **Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors**

Thus far, these pillars of the Match corps program—1) hire bright young people to commit to tutoring for a year²⁵; 2) fully integrate tutoring into the life of the school; 3) provide a strong accountability system to ensure tutor effectiveness; and 4) establish strong relationships between teachers, tutors, parents, and students – have worked well. While it is nearly impossible to disentangle the effects of tutoring on academic achievement from the other factors at work in Match schools, such as excellent teaching and a highly structured ‘no excuses’ environment, there is very strong anecdotal evidence that the effects of Match corps are powerful.

Perhaps the strongest evidence comes in the form of state test scores between 2002 and 2005. In 2002, before the inception of Match Corps and the first year in which Match sophomores participated in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), “20 percent of students failed [MCAS math] and 46 percent tested as needing improvement.” By 2005, the year the tutor corps was fully implemented, “69 percent of the school’s sophomores tested as advanced, the highest possible rating, on the math portion of MCAS, the fourth highest percentage in the state.” The same year “the school ranked 18th out of 338 Massachusetts high schools in English, with 32 percent of students testing as advanced.”²⁶ Essentially, between 2002 and 2005, Match high school was able to reverse student performance on MCAS math: in that time, the majority of sophomores went from struggling to excelling on the test. Importantly, at Match, MCAS success also translated, as Goldstein had hypothesized, into preparing students for college:

By June 2006, Match had graduated three classes and every student from the classes of 2004, 2005, and 2006

was accepted for admission by a four-year college or university (an average of three acceptances per student), including Boston College, Brown, Duke, Georgetown, Hofstra, Howard, Northeastern, Spelman College, and Trinity College.²⁷

And there is growing non-anecdotal evidence that the effect of the kind of tutoring that Match has pioneered can be an effective lever for school reform. A recent quasi-experimental analysis found that, “on average extended learning time (ELT) tutorials at Match Charter Public High School raised student achievement on the 10th grade English language arts examination between .15 and .25 standard deviations per year. This, the author of the study, Matthew Kraft, notes, “is equivalent to approximately an additional years’ worth of instruction.”²⁸

But this recently quantified evidence of the effect of tutoring was something that Match intuitively knew already. Belief in the impact of the tutoring is so strong and the perceived return on investment from hiring tutors so high that Match corps quickly went from a

Table 2.

Match Education 2013 Results, MCAS

100 percent and 93 percent of Match 10th graders scored proficient or advanced in English and mathematics, respectively.
91 percent of Match 3rd graders scored proficient or advanced in mathematics.
90-95 percent of Match high school students participated in AP courses in 2012-2013.
Among early cohorts, 50 percent of Match high school students have finished a four-year college (4.5 times higher than the national average for low-income high school graduates).

program funded by pilot grants to one that the charter school includes in its annual budget. By appealing to tutors' sense of service, providing a small but livable stipend (\$14,300 in the 2013-14 academic year),²⁹ organizing low-cost housing for tutors, and above all, by giving tutors a chance to work in a high-performing school as a means for evaluating their interest in education reform and teaching careers, Match can compete alongside Teach for America for the best college graduates in the country and hire 3-4 tutors for every full-time teacher.

When pressed to describe why the tutor corps helps Match get the results it does, it is this concentrated time with adults and the relationships that develop from that time to which Match leaders point. Notes Alan Safran:

*Match Corps gets to the heart of the human capital question. It's about more people (adults) building more relationships with students. These adults can get kids to make the effort that they might not otherwise make: good teachers and culture can do so much. How do you get more adults into kids' lives? How do you set higher standards and provide the support to meet them—you need to do both. If you can do both, this is the Holy Grail.*³⁰

Jared Taillefer, former Match Corps member and current executive director and principal of Great Oaks Charter School in Newark, New Jersey agrees. "Relationships are key," he notes. "Students benefit from feeling known. As a principal I can shake every student's hand every morning, but the tutor corps puts that on steroids. It's about doing individualized instruction right."³¹

Match leaders and corps members believe they have found one of the secrets to helping students make great achievement gains, and they are committed to sharing that secret with others to improve education nationwide. To that end, not only has Match formally and informally shared how its tutor corps works with schools in the Boston area, it has helped schools and districts in Boston and beyond to implement their own tutoring programs. Understanding how implementation in some of these schools and districts is proceeding is key to understanding the impact of Match Education.

Beyond Match: Growing Tutor Corps for National Impact

The idea of growing Match style tutor corps in Boston and beyond has spread in several ways. Locally, charters and even school districts found it hard not to take notice of Match's strong gains. Some, such as City on a Hill Charter Public School and Phoenix Academy, implemented tutors corps of their own.³² These two schools did so with input and support from current and former Match leaders and staff, either because those leaders went on to work for the new schools or because they offered to consult on tutor corps development.

While both City on a Hill and Phoenix Academy have adapted the corps to meet their own unique needs, underlying Match Corps principles, such as the deployment of tutors as full-time staff members integrated throughout the school day, remain.³³ And the results have been meaningful. City on a Hill (COAH), for example, saw a marked rise in its already strong test scores. In 2008, before the COAH corps was implemented, 67 percent of students scored proficient or higher in grade 10 mathematics and 81 percent scored proficient or higher in grade

■ **Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors**

10 English. After only one year of a fully implemented tutor corps, those numbers rose to 92 percent proficient or higher in grade 10 mathematics and 94 percent proficient or higher in English. Since then, City on a Hill's test scores have remained strong.³⁴

Former Match employees and Match Corps members have also taken the idea beyond Massachusetts: Jared Taillefer is one such example. He began as a Match Corps tutor in the second cohort and went on to be director of development as well as a math teacher and dean of students at Match Middle School and Match High School, but left the organization in 2011 to open Great Oaks Charter School in Newark, New Jersey. Taillefer knew from the start that he wanted to bring the model to Newark because he knew of “the individual support that kids in low-income communities need,” and he saw the Match model’s potential “to benefit the community of Newark as a whole.” While Taillefer also adapted the model slightly—specifically adding “blended learning as a more intentional component of the observation/feedback process”—he notes that his school has “otherwise stuck as closely to the model as possible.” He also points out that Great Oaks showed significant improvement in its second year of operation, some of which he attributes to the tutor corps.³⁵

Researchers have also taken notice. Roland Fryer, professor of economics at Harvard University and director of the Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard, wondered if Match’s program and results (coupled with other critical education reform levers) could be replicated as far away as Houston. His Apollo 20 Initiative used Match-style “high dosage differentiation and tutoring” in an attempt to improve student achievement in nine Houston-area public schools. Other

key aspects of the program treatment, all of which have been declared “tenets of highly effective charter schools” by Fryer and his team, were:

- Human capital management (holding teachers accountable and rewarding strong performance)
- Data-driven instruction, and
- Culture and expectations (getting students to buy into the school’s mission and the importance of education)³⁶
- Extended school day

With 257 tutors in nine schools in the first year of the program, Apollo schools middle school students received approximately 215 hours of tutoring and high school students got about 189 hours. The initial results were promising. Fryer and his team reported statistically significant gains in math for students in Apollo middle and high schools as well as strong high school English language arts results. The gains in schools that received “high-dosage tutoring in math were dramatic,” and the study found that although the five tenets of the program worked together to produce strong overall results, tutoring was, on its own, “highly effective in increasing achievement.”³⁷

One of the most promising things about the Apollo program may be that it demonstrates the capacity of “high-dosage tutoring to work in turnaround contexts.” Very recent evidence from Massachusetts demonstrates that capacity even more clearly.

Lawrence, Massachusetts has long been plagued by poor student achievement. In 2011 the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education declared Lawrence a ‘chronically underperforming district,’ citing years of low test scores and graduation rates.³⁹

Table 3. Apollo 20, Houston, Results³⁸

Math	The math skills acquired by the average Apollo 20 student represent an estimated extra 3 ½ months of additional schooling.
Sixth-Grade Math with Tutoring	Sixth-grade students who received daily math tutoring gained the equivalent of 6 additional months of schooling. Gains achieved by ninth-grade students ranged between nearly 5 months of additional learning to more than 9 months of additional learning.
Reading	Reading performance improved slightly, producing results roughly equal to or just less than a month of additional instruction.

This declaration empowered Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester to appoint a receiver to the district, “an individual or a non-profit group with a proven record of success in improving low-performing schools or districts or the academic performance of disadvantaged students, will have all the powers of the superintendent and school committee and will report directly to the commissioner.”⁴⁰ In early 2012, Commissioner Chester appointed Jeffrey Riley to the job. Although Riley’s approach to turning around Lawrence has included several key reforms, such as the “implementation of a new curriculum, establishment of Acceleration Academies,⁴¹ and a focus on data-driven instruction,” creating a Match-style tutor corps, with help from Match leaders such as Match Export President Alan Safran was also a top priority.⁴²

According to Riley, he chose to incorporate a tutor corps into Lawrence’s turnaround plan because of the Match model’s “track record in other places, such as Houston.” The program was launched for all ninth and tenth graders in two high schools during the 2012-13 school year. Lawrence hired and Match trained 50 tutors to serve approximately 600 students; each student received approximately 150 hours of mathematics tutoring over the course of the school year.⁴³

While Alan Safran of Match Export points out that there are aspects of the Lawrence tutor corps that are unique to the district—such as the background of some of the tutors, many of whom are from the Lawrence area and some of whom are “career changers” and therefore older than a typical Boston corps members⁴⁴—Riley says that, “in many respects, this was a turnkey operation where [Match’s] administrative structure was instrumental in the establishment of the tutor corps.” He also notes, however, that “one of the strengths of the Match tutors is their ability to work collaboratively with the school where they are located. The synergy that came from this partnership was beneficial for our students.”⁴⁵

Indeed, the benefits of establishing a Match tutor corps in Lawrence are now clear. After one full year of implementation at two grade levels in two schools, the results are dramatic: “early returns based on MCAS have been outstanding, with students growing at historical levels.” Students receiving the Match Tutors intervention experienced a 52 point growth (in student growth percentile, or SGP), from 23-75. This is unprecedented math growth and is the greatest one-year changes in SGP any high school has seen in math in Massachusetts history.⁴⁶

Such results have also been a contributing factor to historic growth in Lawrence overall.

■ Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors

Based on MCAS results, 2013 was the first time in three years “that a Lawrence school hasn’t been downgraded to a Level 4.” Furthermore, the district’s student growth percentile for math (the only subject in which the 600 participating students received tutoring) rose from 40 percent to 57 percent, “the highest ever recorded for the school district.”⁴⁷

The dramatic turnarounds seen in places like Houston and Lawrence provide hope that tutoring can be a central component in any comprehensive turnaround plan. But aside from boosting academic achievement, what are the additional positive effects of such intense academic relationship building? This is a question that researchers at the University of Chicago, with support from Match, are trying to answer.

In the 2012-2013 school year, the University of Chicago Crime Lab piloted a program that combines Match-style tutoring in mathematics with an existing sports-based mentoring, known as ‘Becoming a Man.’⁴⁹ The central hypothesis of the study is that tutoring combined with mentoring would decrease violence in the public schools⁵⁰—something that Chicago, a city in which violent crime has plagued the public schools in recent years – sorely needs.

According to the *Chicago Sun Times*, The Crime Lab, which has had support from

Match to implement the tutor corps aspect of its study, reports that the researchers’ hypothesis was confirmed: among the 50 boys who participated in the program in 2012-2013, there was a “67 percent reduction in school misconduct.” Based on those numbers, it predicts “declines in violent crime arrests among the students of 50 to 60 percent over the next year or two — and a drop in drug-related arrests of 40 to 50 percent.” Importantly, the University of Chicago also finds that the effects of Match-style tutoring are significant: mentoring combined with tutoring reduces misconduct more than mentoring alone. These results have garnered high-profile attention. For the 2013-2014 school year, the Crime Lab is extending the program to serve over 500 Chicago-area young men. They are doing so with a \$1 million investment from the MacArthur Foundation, a \$2 million grant from the City of Chicago pledged by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and an additional \$1 million from a private source.⁵¹

While it is, of course, exceedingly difficult to isolate the effects of one program, there is other anecdotal evidence to suggest that the relationships tutors forge with students, and, perhaps the act of tutoring itself, has a socio-emotional impact on young people. As Match founder Michael Goldstein says, it’s becoming more and more relevant to ask, “what are the soft benefits of tutoring?” Some

Table 4. Lawrence, MA Grade 10 MCAS Results, 2012/2013⁴⁸

	2012 Proficient or Higher	2013 Proficient or Higher	2012 Needs Improvement	2013 Needs Improvement	2012 Warning/Failing	2013 Warning/Failing
English Language Arts	55	66	32	23	13	11
Mathematics	34	44	29	27	36	29
Science	22	19	58	58	20	23

would argue that there are many. Following the Apollo 20 experiment in Houston, one observer noted in a *Houston Chronicle* op-ed:

Since the Apollo 20 project was launched... I have witnessed phenomenal behavioral and academic changes in the students. I have seen apathetic students change to students who are excited, enthusiastic learners; students who were failing every subject become engaged in learning and making better grades; students who, in the past, avoided talking with me about their grades, come. . . waving their report cards in their hands to show me their improvement; students who thought of themselves as incapable begin to think of themselves as capable learners; and students who thought that dreams were for others, begin to dare to dream about the world outside their school and community and how they can contribute.⁵²

This description of student growth that goes beyond academic achievement drives home what so many of the Match leaders and corps members interviewed for this paper underscored as central to understanding the effects of Match Corps: tutoring is a crucial component of improving academic outcomes, but so very much more. Tutoring Match-style is about human capital, relationship building, and providing students with the confidence to succeed not only in school, but in life.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Over the years, Match students and those in other organizations that have adopted a Match-style tutoring model have made great achievement gains. For this reason alone, it is important to highlight Match corps for the educational innovation that it is. For much less than the cost of many commonly touted school reform efforts, such as reduced-class

size or extended school day, “high-dosage,” integrated tutoring produces substantially better results. Moreover, it seems clear that there are non-academic benefits to this style of tutoring as well, benefits that may be quantifiable in the future, as the model spreads and becomes integrated with other worthy initiatives, such as violence and gang prevention in Chicago.

The tutor corps innovation should hold great promise for policy-makers, especially those focused on how to turnaround some of the nation’s poorest performing schools and school districts. As has been shown in places like Houston and Lawrence, MA, high-dosage tutoring can be more than just one tool in the kit for school turnaround; it can be a major lever for school reform, even on its own. Of course, for a Match-style tutor corps to work, certain conditions must be in place. Schools and districts must have the freedom to, as Match founder Mike Goldstein puts it, “build the school day around tutoring.” They must also have the autonomy over scheduling and budgets to get the tutor corps approach right.

Recommendations

Put Match-Style Tutoring at the Center of School Turnaround

Policy-makers invested in turning around low-performing schools should view “high-dosage,” Match-style tutoring as a central component of turnaround efforts. When intentionally implemented with an eye to making tutoring a central and integrated part of the school day and to training, supporting, and holding tutors accountable for outcomes, Match-style tutoring has been shown to yield meaningful results in minimal time. Perhaps most importantly, when implemented in conjunction with other school reform efforts such as extended school days, pay-for-

■ **Match-ing Students with Excellent Tutors**

performance, data-driven instruction, and the creation of schools with cultures of high expectations, tutoring has been shown to put already accelerated learning “on steroids.”

Fund Tutoring Wisely

One of the reasons Match Corps and other “high dosage” tutoring efforts have been successful is that schools and districts have prioritized them and made them sustainable by “baking them into their budgets.” Year to year there is little question that the tutors will be present in these schools and integrated as a reliable part of the school day. When thinking about funding tutoring efforts on a larger scale, and perhaps as part of turnaround efforts, consistency is the key. The reform works best when consistently and faithfully implemented, thus when schools and/or districts do not have full budgetary discretion, policy-makers should consider how best to ensure that tutor corps efforts are wisely and reliably funded.

Give Schools and Districts the Autonomy to Innovate

Perhaps even more effective than simply providing schools and districts with the ability to fund tutor corps year to year is giving schools the budgetary and other autonomies they need to make sure the corps function effectively. Budgetary autonomy is key because schools can prioritize tutoring from year to year and even adjust the tutor-pupil ratio as necessary. Overall autonomy to implement the corps as schools and districts see fit is also critical. As in places like Lawrence and Great Oaks, Match provided a model and needed support to ensure that these new tutor corps were faithful to the main principles that had proven effective at Match. But each locale also had the autonomy to make needed changes, such as hiring tutors reflective of the community being served and experimenting

with blended learning to support tutors. As the idea of “high-dosage” tutoring spreads, striking the right balance between faithful implementation of principles that work and flexibility to adapt to local contexts will be exceedingly important.

About the Author:

Cara Stillings Candal is currently the Director of Research and Curriculum at the Center for Better Schools/National Academy for Advanced Teacher Education. In this role, she works to provide targeted, differentiated professional learning opportunities for experienced educators from across the country that have been identified as highly effective by the districts, charter, and faith-based networks in which they work. Cara has worked in the field of education for fifteen years as a high school teacher, as a curriculum and large-scale assessment specialist for the Riverside Publishing Company, and as a Research Assistant Professor at the Boston University School of Education. In her role as researcher and educator at Boston University, her work focused on domestic and international policies affecting educational opportunities for low-income students. Cara is the author of numerous articles on the charter school movement, both nationally and in Massachusetts, and on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. She is also the editor of the book *Partnering for Progress: Boston University, The Chelsea Public Schools, and Twenty Years of Urban Education Reform*.

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