Catapult Learning's High-Impact Tutoring:

Research-Based Design and Impact

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Executive Summary

High-Impact Tutoring Outcomes:


significantly boost learning outcomes


improve student attendance and engagement


help close equity gaps in education

High-Impact Tutoring (HIT) has emerged as one of the most effective strategies for accelerating learning and addressing gaps exacerbated by recent disruptions. This white paper provides an evidence-based overview of HIT and how Catapult Learning's HIT solution is designed and implemented to maximize student growth. Key research, including findings from the National Student Support Accelerator (NSSA) and the Annenberg Institute's EdResearch for Recovery design principles, highlights why intensive tutoring consistently yields significant academic gains for students who need support. The fundamental design elements that make tutoring "high-impact" include frequent sessions, small group sizes, highly-trained and consistent tutors, data-driven instruction, and alignment with school curricula. Catapult Learning's approach closely aligns with these research-based principles through a people–data–curriculum framework, ensuring the quality implementation of the program at scale. Finally, the outcome data demonstrates substantial improvements in student achievement and engagement under Catapult's HIT programs. District leaders, policymakers, and researchers will find that high-impact tutoring, when implemented with fidelity, can significantly boost learning outcomes (often adding several months of academic progress), improve student attendance and engagement, and help close equity gaps in education (Robinson et al., 2021, 2024). The evidence and examples in this paper underscore the academic rationale for investing in HIT, the design principles that drive its success, and the real-world impact seen in schools partnering with Catapult Learning.

Introduction: Rationale for High-Impact Tutoring

Educators nationwide are seeking proven solutions to help students recover from learning loss and persistent achievement gaps. High-impact tutoring has gained prominence as a research-backed intervention to meet this challenge. Multiple rigorous studies confirm that well-designed tutoring programs produce substantial learning gains (Nickow et al., 2020). A recent meta-analysis of randomized studies found that tutoring increased student achievement by an average of 3 to 15 months of additional learning (Robinson et al., 2021, 2024). Likewise, a review of nearly 200 studies concluded that high-dosage tutoring (at least three sessions per week or ~50+ hours over a school year) is one of the few school-based interventions with significant positive effects on both math and reading performance (Robinson et al., 2021, 2024). Notably, high-impact tutoring outperforms many other strategies in improving outcomes for students from low-income backgrounds. In one analysis of various interventions, in-person tutoring was found to be the most effective approach for raising achievement among elementary and middle school students in low-SES communities (Robinson et al., 2021, 2024).

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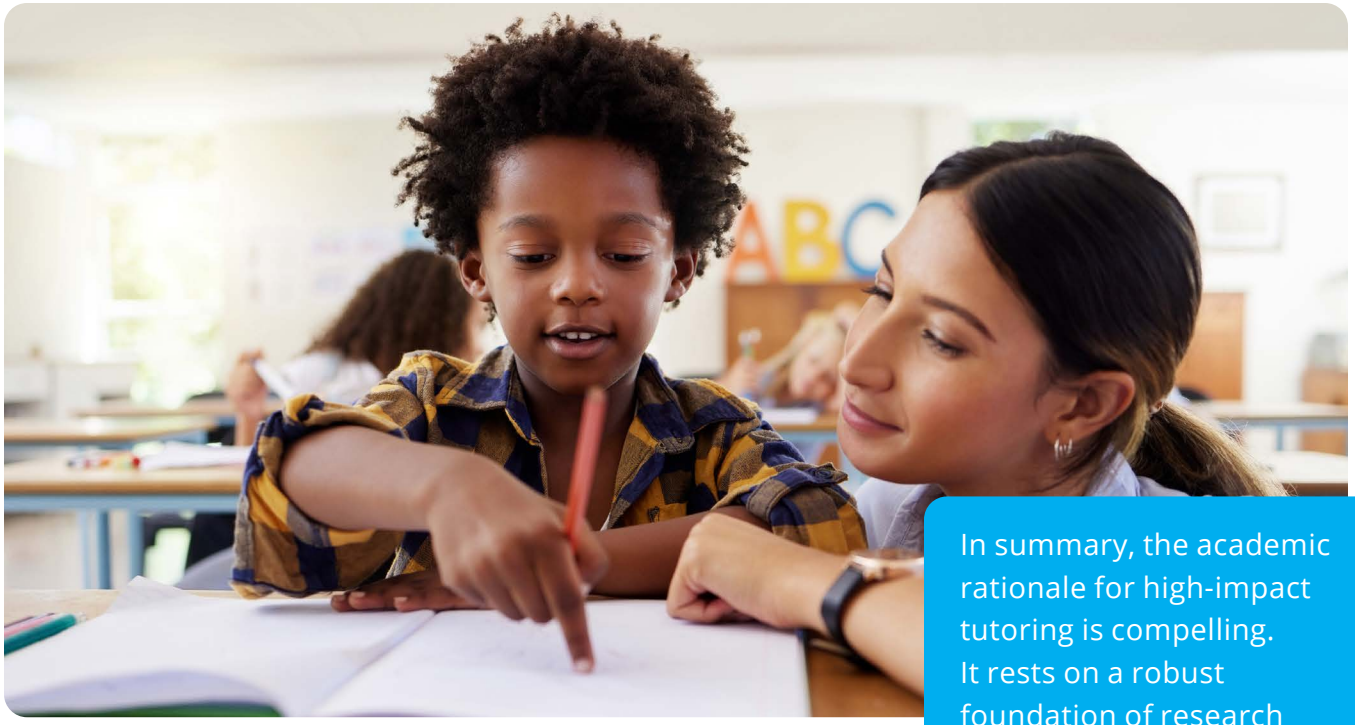
months of additional learning

The urgency for high-impact tutoring has only grown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Widespread instructional disruptions left many students with unfinished learning and skill gaps (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Research indicates these gaps are widest for those who lacked access to supplemental supports during COVID-related school closures (Robinson et al., 2021). High-impact tutoring offers a targeted means to mitigate these losses and promote equity by providing intensive, individualized instruction to the students who need it most. In fact, tutoring is now recognized as the most effective school-based strategy for accelerating learning in reading and math for struggling students (Robinson et al., 2024). Policymakers and education leaders across the country have responded by investing billions of dollars in tutoring initiatives as part of academic recovery plans (Robinson et al., 2024). By the 2023-24 school year, as many as 80% of districts had launched tutoring programs, buoyed by federal recovery funding and strong research support for this approach (Cohen, 2024).



Crucially, not all tutoring is equally effective; "high-impact" tutoring is defined by specific evidence-based design principles that maximize its effectiveness (Robinson et al., 2024). Tutoring that is sporadic, unstructured, or misaligned with the classroom is unlikely to yield the dramatic gains seen in successful programs. In contrast, high-impact tutoring programs provide consistent, data-driven, and relational support that is tightly integrated with students' learning needs. The latter emphasizes factors such as consistent tutor-student relationships, high frequency of sessions scheduled during the school day, use of research-based and high-quality curricula, and ongoing progress monitoring (Robinson et al., 2024). When these conditions are met, the impact can be transformative: tutoring not only raises test scores, it also increases student engagement and confidence. For example, an analysis of a statewide tutoring initiative found students were significantly less likely to be absent on days they had tutoring, suggesting the program boosted their motivation to attend school (Robinson et al., 2024). Even as programs scale up, they continue to deliver meaningful gains. Studies of large-scale tutoring (serving hundreds or thousands of students) found increases of 2 to 10 months of additional learning in a school year, proving that high-impact tutoring can be effective at scale when implemented with fidelity (Robinson et al., 2024).

In summary, the academic rationale for high-impact tutoring is compelling. It rests on a robust foundation of research demonstrating that intensive tutoring can substantially accelerate learning for a broad range of students (Robinson et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2024). This is especially critical in the current context, as schools strive to recover from learning losses and ensure all students, particularly those most at-risk, have the support needed to thrive.

The following sections of this paper will detail the key design elements that make tutoring programs effective, and how Catapult Learning has built its High-Impact Tutoring model around these proven principles.

Research-Based Design Principles for High-Impact Tutoring

Decades of research and recent guidance from the NSSA and EdResearch for Recovery have converged on a set of design principles that distinguish high-impact tutoring from standard homework help or less structured interventions. High-impact tutoring is intensive, relationship-based, and individualized, with program characteristics deliberately crafted to maximize student growth (Robinson et al., 2024).

The key design elements that contribute to positive outcomes include:

- frequency and consistency of sessions
- small group size or one-on-one
- qualified or well-trained tutors
- strong tutor-student relationships
- high-quality curriculum and alignment
- data-driven monitoring and feedback
- integration with school schedules and supports
- student prioritization and equity
- delivery mode of in-person versus virtual

Most effective tutoring plan:

Up to 5+
sessions per week

15-20
minutes per session for younger students

30-45
minutes per session for older students

10+ weeks

1:1 to 1:4
tutor-to-student ratio

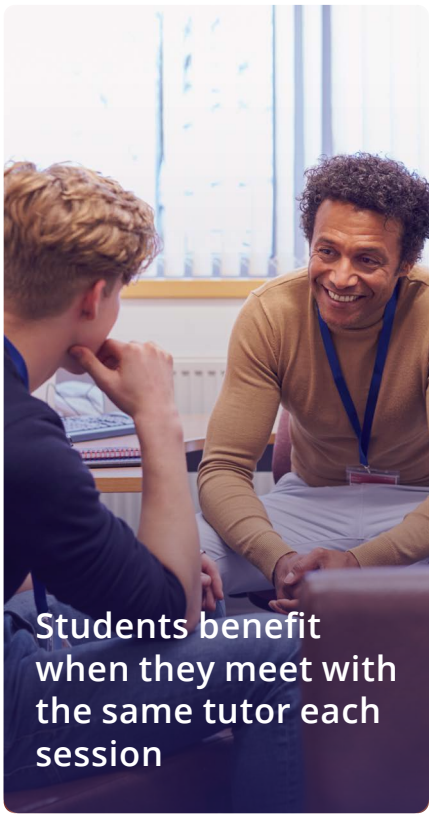
Frequency and Consistency of Sessions

Tutoring is most effective when delivered at high frequency – generally at least three sessions per week over an extended period (Robinson et al., 2024). Consistent, frequent sessions (Nickow et al., 2020) provide the sustained practice and reinforcement necessary to bring students to grade-level proficiency. Studies find that once-weekly tutoring is typically insufficient; effective programs usually run for a minimum of 10 weeks, and many last much longer (Robinson et al., 2024). Sessions of ~30–45 minutes are common for older students, whereas younger children may benefit from shorter, more frequent meetings (e.g., 15 to 20 minutes, 5 days a week) (Robinson et al., 2024). Maintaining a regular schedule, ideally embedded during the school day, also improves attendance and reduces barriers to participation (Robinson et al., 2024). In-school tutoring has consistently shown better outcomes than after-school models, as students are more likely to attend and remain engaged when support is scheduled into their daily routine (Robinson et al., 2024).

Small Group Size or One-on-One

Tutor-to-student ratio is a critical factor. Research indicates that tutoring is most effective when conducted either one-on-one or in small groups, typically with no more than two or three students per tutor (Robinson et al., 2024). Keeping groups small (3:1 or 4:1) allows for personalization and ensures each student receives ample attention and feedback. As group size grows beyond three, the format begins to resemble a regular small class, which is less individualized and requires exceptional teaching skills to be effective for all students (Robinson et al., 2024). **Tutoring programs with a maximum group size of four or fewer have shown the most significant learning gains, whereas programs with groups of five or more have seen diminished effects** (Robinson et al., 2024; Nickow et al, 2020). In practice, many high-impact tutoring initiatives either deploy one-on-one tutoring (the gold standard for personalization) or limit groups to two to four students, allowing instruction to be closely tailored to each student's needs.

Qualified, Well-Trained Tutors



Students benefit when they meet with the same tutor each session

The effectiveness of tutoring hinges on the quality of the tutor. Programs have been successful with a range of tutor profiles, including certified teachers, paraprofessionals, community members, and college students, provided that tutors receive sufficient training and ongoing support (Robinson et al., 2024). Research suggests that tutors should be skilled in instruction and content, and require initial training aligned with the tutoring model, as well as continuous coaching or supervision to maintain quality (Robinson et al., 2024; Catapult Learning, n.d.a). High-impact programs often carefully select tutors and invest in building their capacity. A recent pilot study of high-impact tutoring delivered by preservice teachers in grades 2–5 found that third graders receiving reading support grew faster than their non-tutored peers, and fourth- and fifth-grade students in math tutoring made stronger gains than comparison students (Broduer et al., 2025). For example, effective programs like those run by Catapult Learning have successfully used part- and full-time tutors who receive specific pedagogical training to deliver a structured, standards-aligned curriculum. Consistency is also vital: students benefit when they meet with the same tutor each session, allowing a strong instructional relationship to form (Robinson et al., 2024). These relationships build trust and motivation. Tutors become mentors who understand each student's needs, which increases engagement and effort. In short, tutor quality and consistency are foundational. A capable and caring tutor who knows the student can dramatically accelerate their learning.

Strong Tutor-Student Relationships

High-impact tutoring is inherently relationship-driven. Unlike larger classes, tutoring allows for a close bond, as students often view their tutor as a mentor or coach. Research highlights that having a consistent tutor fosters trust, which in turn boosts academic risk-taking and persistence (Robinson et al., 2024). The NSSA notes that a consistent pairing throughout the program duration is ideal, so the tutor can track progress and adjust to the student's learning style (Robinson et al., 2024). This continuity and personal attention keep students engaged and accountable. In effective programs, tutors celebrate student successes and provide encouragement, which builds the student's academic confidence.

7%

increase of student attendance on tutoring days

The positive relationship itself becomes a motivator. Evidence shows that student attendance increases by more than 7% on tutoring days, likely because students look forward to working with their tutor in a supportive environment (Robinson et al., 2024). Thus, nurturing strong tutor-student relationships are not just a byproduct but a deliberate design element that improves academic and social-emotional outcomes.

High-Quality Curriculum and Alignment

Tutoring is most impactful when instruction is targeted to fill skill gaps while also reinforcing grade-level content. Nickow et al. highlight that tutoring is most effective when it is targeted, structured, and aligned with classroom goals, with regular progress monitoring to tailor instruction and maximize gains (Nickow et al., 2020, (p. 5-7; 27-28)). Effective programs utilize high-quality, research-based instructional materials that are aligned to standards (Robinson et al., 2024). Rather than random homework help, high-impact tutoring provides structured lessons focused on areas of need (e.g., foundational reading skills or key math concepts) identified through assessment (Robinson et al., 2024).

Rather than random homework help, high-impact tutoring provides structured lessons focused on areas of need

At the same time, tutoring should complement the core class curriculum, rather than existing in a vacuum. Design principles emphasize alignment with what students are learning in their regular classrooms (Robinson et al., 2024). This alignment ensures tutoring is relevant (supporting class objectives) and avoids conflicts or overload. For example, reading tutors might use a phonics-based program consistent with the school's literacy approach, or math tutors might pre-teach upcoming topics to boost students' confidence (Kortecamp & Peters, 2023). The NSSA recommends that tutoring content focus on the specific missed skills and knowledge that hinder students' progress, using proven methods such as the Science of Reading for literacy or evidence-based math strategies (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). By utilizing a strong curriculum and aligning it with classroom instruction, tutoring can accelerate learning gains and help students meet grade-level expectations more efficiently (Robinson et al., 2024).

Data-Driven Monitoring and Feedback

Frequent assessment and progress monitoring are hallmarks of high-impact tutoring. Research finds that data-informed programs (i.e., regularly measuring student progress and using that data to tailor instruction) achieve better outcomes (Nickow et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2024). Effective tutoring includes diagnostic assessments at the start to pinpoint gaps, ongoing formative quizzes or checks for understanding during each session, and interim assessments to track progress and growth. This data allows tutors (and program coordinators) to individualize instruction, focusing each session on the specific skills a student has not yet mastered (Robinson et al., 2024). Data systems can also identify which tutoring strategies or activities are yielding the most growth, enabling continuous improvement. Moreover, sharing progress data with students can boost their motivation by making gains visible. HIT programs often utilize tutoring management platforms or tools to track attendance, lesson completion, and assessment results, which are then fed into dashboards that guide instructional adjustments (Robinson et al., 2024). In sum, continuous monitoring and feedback loops ensure that tutoring is responsive and accountable, course-correcting when needed, so that every student is on track to meet their growth goals.

Integration with School Schedules and Supports

Another design principle is to integrate tutoring into the school schedule. Studies show tutoring works best when it is embedded in the school day or closely tied to school routines, rather than being a voluntary add-on after school or on the weekend (Robinson et al., 2024; Nickow et al., 2020). In-school scheduling not only improves attendance but also facilitates coordination with teachers and school staff. Effective programs have strong support from principals and teachers; for example, classroom teachers may help identify target skills or coordinate to avoid scheduling conflicts (Robinson et al., 2024).

Tutoring works best when it is embedded in the school day or closely tied to school routines, rather than being a voluntary add-on after school or on the weekend

Administrative backing and coordination ensure that tutoring is viewed as an integral part of the academic program, rather than a peripheral service. Additionally, high-impact tutoring can be aligned with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks as a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention for students who need extra support (National Student Support Accelerator, 2023). Integration also involves ensuring logistical support, including space in the school for tutoring sessions, allocating time in the master schedule, and communicating with families about the program. The design principle here is coherence. Tutoring should complement and reinforce other educational efforts rather than operate in isolation.

Student Prioritization and Equity

Finally, decisions about which students receive tutoring should be guided by clear criteria and local needs.

Research identifies three models for prioritization:
(Robinson et al., 2024)

- **need-driven (targeting students who are behind or at risk)**
- **curriculum-driven (tutoring tied to specific coursework or exams)**
- **universal (offering tutoring to all students as enrichment)**

Most COVID-19 recovery tutoring initiatives have focused on high-need students, those who score below benchmarks or have fallen significantly behind grade-level expectations. This need-based targeting can maximize impact by directing resources to the students who stand to gain the most. However, some schools adopt broader models (e.g., universal tutoring periods available to all) to avoid stigma and ensure no one is overlooked. The EdResearch for Recovery design principles suggest that context matters: the optimal approach may vary depending on a district's goals, but equity should remain central (Robinson et al., 2024). That means proactively reaching students from underserved groups who might not seek help on their own. In all cases, clarity on tutoring eligibility and goals helps set the program up for success. High-impact programs often start with diagnostic data to identify priority students and then continuously adapt, possibly exiting students who have caught up and onboarding new ones. The guiding principle is to use tutoring as a scalable equity lever, extending personalized learning to those who might otherwise lack access.

Delivery Mode – In-Person vs. Virtual

Traditionally, most high-impact tutoring research and practice have centered on in-person delivery, and these programs have demonstrated the most significant impacts on achievement (Robinson et al., 2024). Face-to-face interaction facilitates stronger relationships and real-time feedback. However, emerging evidence indicates that live virtual tutoring or hybrid models can also be effective under certain conditions (Robinson et al., 2024). During the pandemic, many programs transitioned to online tutoring and still achieved meaningful gains, especially when tutors were well-trained to engage students remotely and when sessions were conducted frequently. Virtual tutoring can increase reach and flexibility (e.g., connecting students with tutors outside their region), but it requires reliable technology access and careful planning to mimic the interactivity of in-person support. The key is that regardless of mode, the program should maintain the other design principles (small group size (often 1:1 or 2:1), consistency, quality curriculum, etc.). Some districts are now blending modes by offering in-person tutoring during school and online tutoring after school for additional practice. While in-person tutoring remains the gold standard for most young learners, the viability of virtual tutoring is a promising development to expand high-impact support to more students, especially in areas with tutor shortages (Robinson et al., 2024). Program designers should consider how to leverage technology without compromising the critical elements of high-impact tutoring.

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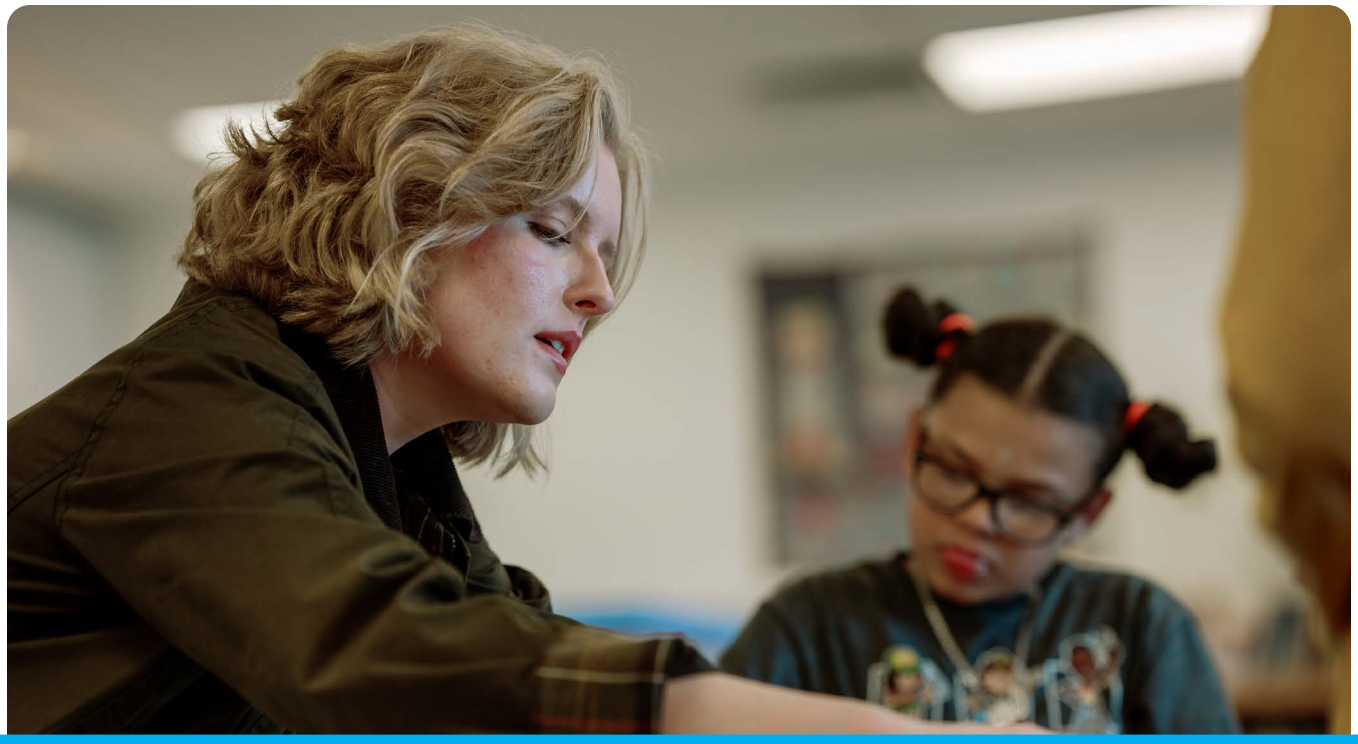
These design elements, drawn from extensive research and summarized by organizations such as the NSSA and the Annenberg Institute, form the blueprint for effective tutoring programs (Robinson et al., 2021, 2024). A successful high-impact tutoring initiative will intentionally incorporate all these components: frequency, small-group instruction, tutor quality, strong relationships, a robust curriculum, data-driven use, integration, targeted reach, and an appropriate delivery mode.

The following section will illustrate how Catapult Learning has built its HIT solution around these principles, creating a model that not only adheres to best practices but has been externally recognized for its quality and impact.



Catapult Learning's High-Impact Tutoring Model and Implementation

Catapult Learning's HIT program is deliberately designed to align with the research-based principles outlined above. As a national educational services provider with five decades of experience, Catapult has refined a comprehensive and effective tutoring model that is student-centered, data-driven, and scalable. The program's academic rationale and structure are grounded in evidence, and this has been validated through third-party evaluations; for instance, Catapult's tutoring program has met Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Level 2 (Moderate) evidence standards, indicating it has demonstrated effectiveness in improving student outcomes (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Additionally, Catapult earned Stanford's NSSA Tutoring Program Design Badge for adhering to research-based standards in areas such as tutor quality, dosage, curricula, and data utilization (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). These recognitions signal that the program's design is not only well-intentioned but also rigorously vetted against national benchmarks for high-impact tutoring.

Key Design Features of Catapult's HIT Program

The Catapult model incorporates all the critical elements of high-impact tutoring in a turnkey solution for districts. Some defining features include:

People – Skilled & Supported Tutors:

Catapult places a heavy emphasis on tutor quality. All tutors in the program possess at least a four-year college degree, and many are certified teachers or have advanced education. More importantly, every tutor undergoes up to 40 hours of specialized training in Catapult's High-Impact Tutoring methodologies before working with students (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). This training covers evidence-based instructional strategies (such as the Science of Reading for literacy and proven numeracy techniques), use of the curriculum and assessments, and methods for building student rapport. Tutors also receive ongoing support from experienced Supervisors who act as academic coaches by providing ongoing observations, mentorship, professional development, and feedback (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Catapult's approach ensures that tutors are not left as novices on their own; instead, they are part of a supported instructional team. The program's "People" pillar focuses on recruiting talented educators and continuously developing their skills to deliver consistent, high-quality instruction (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Tutors and students are paired for the duration of the tutoring engagement, strengthening relationships that are vital to engagement, confidence-building, and academic progress. In short, Catapult invests in tutor training, coaching, and management to maintain a high standard of instructional excellence, directly reflecting research findings on tutor effectiveness.

Data – Assessment & Progress Monitoring:

Data is at the core of Catapult's implementation. At the outset, students take diagnostic assessments to identify their current performance levels and pinpoint areas where they have skill gaps. Catapult utilizes a suite of formative and summative assessment tools, including diagnostic tests, ongoing progress monitoring with daily exit tickets and ongoing progress checks, interim benchmarks, and post-program assessments (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). This data is captured in Catapult Learning Central, Catapult's proprietary tutoring management platform, which provides tutors, site coordinators, supervisors, as well as district leaders and principals with clear, actionable insights in real time (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). After each tutoring session, tutors record the mastery of lesson objectives and any noted difficulties, which enables them to make day-to-day adjustments to instructional plans. Catapult also uses data to group students by skill needs, track attendance, and measure overall impact (e.g., growth percentiles, benchmark gains). Regular progress reports are shared with classroom teachers and administrators to keep everyone aligned (Robinson et al., 2024). This intensive use of data ensures that Catapult's tutoring is highly individualized and accountable. If a student isn't making the expected progress, the data flags it, and instructional strategies are revisited promptly. By building a robust data infrastructure, Catapult's model embodies the "data-informed" principle of high-impact tutoring, utilizing evidence to drive decision-making at every level of the program (Robinson et al., 2024).

Curriculum – Evidence-Based and Aligned:

Catapult Learning's HIT curriculum is another strength of the model. The program provides its own flexible proprietary literacy and math curricula, which are grounded in evidence-based practices and designed to target the specific foundational skills that struggling learners often need to meet grade-level expectations (Catapult Learning, n.d.b). For example, the literacy tutoring curriculum is aligned with the Science of Reading, emphasizing phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through an explicit and systematic instructional approach (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). The math curriculum focuses on core number sense, problemsolving strategies, and math facts fluency, all aligned to state standards. Importantly, Catapult works with each partner school district to align the tutoring content with the district's curricula, pacing, and standards (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Tutors reinforce what students are learning in their regular classrooms, using materials that complement classroom content and lessons. This alignment avoids any "disconnect;" therefore, tutoring time is not spent on random worksheets, but rather on priority skills and high-impact content that will translate to better classroom performance (Catapult Learning, n.d.a; Robinson et al., 2024). The curriculum is also adaptive to student level: tutors have access to lessons at various tiers, enabling them to

scaffold up or down based on the student's progress. Combined with the frequent assessments, this ensures each student is working at an appropriate level of challenge. Catapult also provides all necessary instructional materials (lesson plans, student resource books, whiteboards, manipulatives, etc.), making it a saleable solution so that districts do not have to develop or source curriculum on their own (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). The result is a coherent instructional program where every tutoring session has a clear objective tied to filling a known gap or reinforcing a key standard.

Session Structure and Dosage:

Catapult's implementation is designed to meet the dosage levels recommended by research. Tutoring sessions are 30 to 45 minutes long and conducted multiple times per week, up to 5 days a week if possible (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). In many partner schools, students receive four sessions per week in each subject (literacy or math), often during intervention periods built into the schedule. Catapult's model is flexible to accommodate three to five sessions per week as needed, with an emphasis on high frequency, intensity, and consistency. All sessions are scheduled during the school day (e.g., designated intervention blocks, study hall) to maximize attendance and reduce the logistical burdens on schools and families (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). This in-school delivery has been key to reaching students who might not attend after-school programs due to transportation or other barriers. Group sizes in Catapult's tutoring are kept small: typically three students, and no more than four students per tutoring group (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Many districts opt for even smaller groupings for critical needs (and in many cases, one-on-one for the most intensive support). This maintains the personalized nature of instruction. Each tutoring group remains consistent throughout the program, with the same tutor assigned, thereby fostering strong tutor-student relationships. The format, small groups of up to four, with 30–45 minute sessions at least 3 days per week, directly mirrors the evidence on optimal tutoring programming (Robinson et al., 2024). Catapult's ability to deliver this dosage at scale (the organization has delivered **over 27 million in-person tutoring sessions** nationwide to date) speaks to its operational capacity and experience (Catapult Learning, n.d.a).

Integrated Program Management:

Catapult Learning handles the end-to-end implementation of the tutoring program, which eases the burden on school and district staff. This includes tutor hiring and placement, training, providing the curricula and materials, scheduling support, and progress reporting (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). Each partner district works closely with a local Catapult team which works closely with school leaders to ensure smooth integration and operations. Teachers and principals are engaged through regular updates and invited to observe sessions and discuss student progress. By functioning as a collaborative partner, Catapult aligns its tutoring with the district's goals (for instance, focusing on schools with the highest needs or aligning tutoring objectives with school improvement plans). The emphasis on stakeholder communication is another aspect drawn from research: effective programs ensure that all stakeholders (students, families, teachers, administrators) understand the tutoring model and its goals (Robinson et al., 2024). Catapult often begins partnerships with a planning phase that includes teacher input on student needs and logistical details such as how tutoring will fit into the master schedule. Throughout the implementation process, data dashboards and reports keep school and district leaders informed of attendance, growth, and any operational issues. This level of coordination and support helps sustain the program's quality and effectiveness over time.

In essence, Catapult Learning's HIT solution operationalizes the design principles of high-impact tutoring in a practical and scalable manner. The program's structure, high-frequency sessions, small group instruction, well-trained tutors, targeted curriculum, embedded assessments, and in-school delivery, is intentionally built on the pillars of People, Data, and Curriculum (Catapult Learning, n.d.a). "People" represents the strong tutor workforce and coaching support; "Data" represents the assessment-driven continuous improvement; "Curriculum" represents the use of evidence-based instructional content aligned to student needs and state standards.

By upholding these pillars, Catapult ensures that its tutoring is not only high in dosage but also high in quality. This approach has yielded measurable success for students, as discussed in the next section.

Evidence of Impact: Student Outcomes

Evidence from Catapult Learning's implementations across various states and districts shows that the high-impact tutoring model is delivering significant gains in student achievement and engagement. Both internal program evaluations and independent measures have documented improvements in academic growth, proficiency rates, and even attendance and motivation. While Catapult consistently monitors its programs' progress and regularly conducts research with 3rd party evaluators, the available outcome data already indicate substantial benefits for participating students.

Below are a few highlights from recent programs (2023–2025) that illustrate the impact:

ESSA-Validated Impact Across Grade Levels:

Catapult's High-Impact Tutoring model is backed by multiple third-party studies that meet federal ESSA evidence standards and demonstrate impact across early elementary and middle school.

2 months

additional learning for Catapult Learning middle school students

Middle School Math (ESSA Tier 2): An independent evaluation listed on Evidence for ESSA found that Catapult's middle school math tutoring services led to significant academic growth and met the criteria for moderate evidence. This ESSA Level 2 study conducted by the Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University examined the impact of Catapult Learning's tutoring services. The authors reported that their impact analyses showed a significant positive impact of services on middle school math achievement, with treatment students outperforming matched comparison students by nearly 4 points, which was equivalent to 2 additional months of learning. Additional subgroup analyses showed additional positive impacts for Hispanic, female, and Title I students. Results for middle school reading were also directionally positive, with Catapult students outgaining students in the control group by almost 1 additional month of learning. (Johns Hopkins University, n.d.).

3 months
additional learning in math

4 months
additional learning in reading for Title I K-2 students

K–2 Reading and Math (ESSA Tier 3): A comparative study of Catapult's Title I-funded tutoring program found that early elementary students receiving tutoring demonstrated stronger outcomes, particularly when receiving consistent dosage. This ESSA Level 3 study from the 2023-2024 school year focused on Title 1 students who started the school year below the 60th percentile in reading and/or math only, found that Catapult Learning students who met or exceeded the minimum attendance thresholds for reading and/or math services in Grades K-2 improved the equivalent of almost 3 additional months of learning in reading and 4 additional months of learning compared to Title 1 students in the same schools that did not utilize Catapult services. (Witt, 2023a).

3 months
additional learning in math for students starting below the 60th percentile

K–2 Math (ESSA Tier 3): Another study focusing on early elementary math showed that students in the Catapult program made meaningful gains in foundational math skills compared to their non-participating peers. This ESSA Level 3 study, also completed in the 2023-2024 school year, compared Catapult tutoring students who started the year below the 60th percentile in math with a control group of similarly achieving students who did not receive services and found that K-2 math students improved by 3 months of additional learning. (Witt, 2023b).

4 months
additional learning in math

2 months
additional learning in reading for 6-8 grade students

Middle School Math and Reading (ESSA Tier 3): A study on Catapult's middle school tutoring program revealed consistent gains in both math and reading for students participating in small-group, high-frequency sessions. Students in grades 6-8 who were enrolled in Catapult tutoring services and attended the recommended number of sessions outperformed their peers by the equivalent of nearly 4 months of learning in math and 2 months of learning in reading. (Witt, 2023c).

Accelerated Academic Growth:

In a partnership with one of Nevada's largest school districts, Catapult provided in-person high-impact tutoring to 638 Title I students in grades K–12 during the 2023–24 school year. The results were striking: students receiving tutoring achieved a 16% increase in meeting or exceeding math growth targets, far outpacing the national comparison group's mere 1% year-over-year gain (Catapult Learning, n.d.b). Reading outcomes similarly showed above-average growth. This acceleration in growth indicates that Catapult's tutored students made several months more progress in a year than their non-tutored peers, a testament to the program's effectiveness in closing gaps.

16%

increase in meeting or exceeding math growth targets

Improved Attendance and Engagement:

The same Nevada district saw notable gains in student engagement. Tutored students posted a 17% year-over-year increase in attendance on school days (Catapult Learning, n.d.b). In other words, students were significantly more likely to attend school regularly when they were scheduled to have tutored sessions, reflecting increased motivation. School leaders reported that the tutoring program helped re-engage students who had been chronically absent after the pandemic. This aligns with research suggesting that effective tutoring can bolster students' connection to school by providing consistent adult support and success experiences (Robinson et al., 2024). The attendance boost is a valuable ancillary outcome, as it likely contributes to learning in all subjects.

17%

year-over-year increase in attendance

Dramatic Proficiency Gains:

In 35 schools across Virginia, Catapult Learning's high-impact tutoring was implemented as a literacy and math intervention for 711 elementary and middle school students. Over the course of the program, participating students tripled their math proficiency rates and doubled their reading proficiency rates (Catapult Learning, n.d.c). For example, if only 15% of the students were proficient in math at baseline, that percentage jumped to around 45% after the tutoring, three times the original rate. Such gains are rarely seen in a single year, highlighting how concentrated tutoring can rapidly move students toward proficiency. These outcomes were achieved despite the students initially performing below grade level, demonstrating that high-quality tutoring can unlock latent potential and accelerate learning for students who struggle academically.

3x

math proficiency rates

Literacy Improvement for Struggling Readers:

In a focused middle school literacy initiative, daily high-impact tutoring yielded fast and meaningful gains for struggling readers. By midyear, 59% of the participating students had advanced at least one performance level in reading. By year's end, 100% of the initially struggling readers had improved at least one reading level (Catapult Learning, n.d.c). In practice, this meant that every student who started below grade level in reading showed quantifiable progress, with some moving from far below basic to basic, others from basic to proficient, and so on. Achieving a one-level jump for all participants within a school year is a significant accomplishment, given that many of these students had previously shown stagnant reading growth. Teachers noted increased reading fluency and confidence in these students, corroborating the quantitative gains. This success story highlights the effectiveness of daily tutoring in literacy, consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of intensity and frequency in reading interventions.

100%

of struggling readers improved at least 1 reading point

Broad Literacy Gains in Early Grades:

High-impact tutoring has proven effective even with younger learners. In seven school districts across Massachusetts, Catapult delivered tutoring to 438 students in grades K–3 to strengthen foundational reading skills. The outcome: 99% of those K–3 students demonstrated improvements in literacy skills as measured by phonics and reading assessments (Catapult Learning, n.d.c). Almost 440 students achieved leaps in early literacy benchmarks (like letter sound recognition and reading accuracy), translating to more children reading on grade level by year's end. Teachers in these schools reported not only improvements in test scores but also heightened student enthusiasm for reading and increased classroom participation. Virtually every student benefited, which is crucial at the primary level, where early reading proficiency is a predictor of later academic success.

99%

of K-3 students demonstrated literacy skills improvements

Math Achievement Growth:

In a large Midwestern district, Catapult's math-focused HIT program served 836 students. These students saw a 56-percentile point gain on math growth assessments and nearly doubled their math proficiency rates over the course of the program (Catapult Learning, n.d.c). A 56-percentile gain suggests that if a student started at the 20th percentile nationally in math, they moved to roughly the 76th percentile after tutoring, a remarkable improvement in relative standing. By doubling proficiency, the program closed gaps and brought many more students to meet or exceed state math standards. Such results provide concrete evidence that consistent, targeted tutoring can substantially improve mathematical understanding and performance, even for students who began significantly behind grade-level expectations.

+56

percentile point gain on math growth assessments

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

Beyond the numbers, the qualitative feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive, with more than 97% of school leaders. In multiple districts, reporting high satisfaction with tutoring implementations. For instance, principals in the Nevada program described earlier were "extremely likely" to recommend Catapult Learning's HIT to their colleagues, citing the strong academic results and the collaborative support provided to school staff (Catapult Learning, n.d.b). District administrators have noted that the partnership with Catapult provided the needed expertise and bandwidth that their own staff could not easily supply, especially in the wake of COVID-19 disruptions. Teachers have appreciated the alignment of tutoring with their classroom goals and communication from tutors about student progress. This stakeholder buy-in is essential for sustainability. The fact that educators and leaders see tangible benefits and endorse the program increases the likelihood that tutoring initiatives will continue and expand. It also reflects well on the program's quality; a tutoring provider consistently recommended by school leaders is one demonstrating outcomes and reliability.

97%

positive feedback from school leaders

Collectively, these outcome examples show that Catapult Learning's high-impact tutoring is delivering on its promise of measurable student gains. Students in the program are catching up to their peers and, in many cases, exceeding expected growth trajectories. They are more engaged in school and more confident in their skills. While individual results vary by context, the overall pattern across locations and grade levels is clear: when the high-impact tutoring model is implemented with fidelity, as Catapult has done by adhering to the research-based design principles, significant improvements in learning can be achieved within a single school year. This lends credence to the broader research literature and reinforces that investing in well-designed tutoring can yield a high return in student outcomes.

Conclusion

High-impact tutoring has moved to the forefront of educational strategies because it marries common-sense educational practice with robust empirical support. One-on-one or small-group instruction, delivered frequently by trained tutors using quality curricula, addresses learning gaps in a way that traditional classroom instruction alone often cannot (Cohen, 2025). The research consensus, as highlighted by the NSSA and EdResearch for Recovery, is that tutoring, when done effectively, is one of the most powerful interventions for accelerating student learning (Robinson et al., 2024). The challenge for schools and districts is how to implement tutoring programs that faithfully incorporate the proven design principles and can operate at scale (White et al., 2021).

Catapult Learning's High-Impact Tutoring solution offers a model for meeting that challenge. It provides a structured, evidence-based program that aligns with what studies identify as essential features: high dosage (multiple sessions per week), small groups, consistent, well-supported tutors, alignment with classroom content, and continual use of data to drive instruction. Catapult's experience across thousands of schools demonstrates that these elements can be delivered effectively in partnership with districts, producing gains in academic achievement and student engagement. Notably, the program's success across different states, subjects, and grade levels shows that high-impact tutoring is a versatile tool that can boost early literacy, raise middle school math scores, and support high school learners just as well, so long as the core design remains sound (Robinson et al., 2024).

For district leaders and education policymakers, the implications are clear: investing in highimpact tutoring can yield substantive short-term and long-term benefits. In the short term, students make rapid progress toward proficiency, and previously disengaged learners reconnect with school. In the long term, these gains can compound, thus improving graduation rates, closing equity gaps, and better preparing students for college and careers. However, realizing these benefits requires careful attention to program design and the quality of implementation. The examples in this paper underscore that tutoring is not a generic commodity; its impact depends on the specific way it is delivered. Programs like Catapult Learning's HIT provide a blueprint, but any tutoring initiative should be continuously evaluated and refined against the key design principles and student outcome data.

As education systems continue to address unfinished learning in the wake of COVID-19 and beyond, high-impact tutoring stands out as a research-backed, scalable solution capable of driving meaningful improvement (Cohen, 2025). The evidence base cited here, ranging from meta-analyses to case studies, converges on the conclusion that when implemented with high fidelity, tutoring can add months of learning in a matter of weeks, rekindle students' enthusiasm for learning, and ultimately improve academic trajectories (Robinson et al., 2024). In a time when every learning opportunity is precious, high-impact tutoring represents a high-leverage investment in our students' futures. By adhering to the best practices and learnings from successful models like Catapult Learning's, school districts can implement tutoring initiatives that truly deliver high impact and help all students catch up, keep up, and excel.

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