

Data Sources for These Profiles

A variety of data sources were used to document the features of each tutoring model as operated in the 2023–2024 school year. This appendix describes these sources, the timing of data collection, and any associated limitations.

Before programs launched, MDRC and Education Lab assigned site teams to particular locations. Before the school year started, these teams worked with the district or state coordinators (the people in districts or states designated as being responsible for PLI) to document planned program features. This information was used to populate the “as designed” elements of the infographics. The “as designed” entries under “amount of tutoring” are the minimum weekly amounts the district or state wanted the program to provide.

To learn about how the programs actually operated during the school year, in the spring of 2024 the research team surveyed the individual in each school responsible for its tutoring programs (the *school coordinator*) and tutors. Ninety percent of the school coordinators and 90 percent of the tutors responded to the survey. Data on “as implemented” program features were drawn primarily from this survey, supplemented by interviews with the school coordinators, and information the site teams gathered over the year when they visited the schools. School coordinators reported on the number of students who were typically assigned to a tutor, the typical length of a tutoring session in minutes, and the number of sessions students typically were offered per week. The actual span of the program was calculated as the number of school days between the start and end dates (that were recorded by the staff teams as they occurred), minus any major program interruptions. The resulting number of school days was then divided by five to calculate weeks of operations. The characteristics of the tutors came from the tutors’ survey.

“Actual” amounts of tutoring students received were calculated using attendance records tutors kept on their students. The accuracy of these estimates depends on how consistently tutors recorded attendance and whether the schools were able to provide the research team with complete data. The attendance records in Fulton County were particularly problematic. Thus, it is likely that students actually received more tutoring in Fulton County schools than these two-page summaries present. In addition, occasionally the “typical length” of a session does not match the actual number of minutes received divided by the actual number of sessions received. This discrepancy between reported length and the calculated length could be due to attendance-recording issues, or coordinators could be reporting what should have occurred rather than what did occur.

Information on how the tutoring sessions were actually run came from school coordinators’ survey responses, supplemented by site teams’ observations and, in some cases, follow-up interviews of coordinators. These sources were used to assess when in the school day

tutoring generally occurred, whether it was offered in person or virtually, the classroom format (pull-out or push-in), whether it offered integrated computer-assisted instruction, and the instructional material used.

To estimate program cost, the study team sampled schools purposively, in most instances selecting two schools per program type.¹ Schools were selected to produce a sample that included variation in context-related measures such as program size and urban or rural character. In addition, because the cost estimates aimed to reflect actual costs as implemented, programs were selected to provide variation using the “as implemented” measures rather than the “as planned” ones. Since the school coordinators had not taken their surveys, the cost team relied on the site teams, who were in contact with the schools during the school year, to provide descriptions of schools’ “as implemented” characteristics. Finally, because the cost of each program type was based on a small number of schools, the cost estimates should be viewed as ballpark estimates rather than precise ones.

The cost estimates for each school were calculated using the Ingredients Method.² This approach accounts for the full economic costs of all resources used to implement the tutoring program above those used in the school’s business as usual, including reallocated or donated resources. The major cost ingredients calculated were personnel time (for tutors, school coordinators, other managers, teachers, and proctors, both in the classroom and for up-front planning and preparation), materials, equipment, and curriculum fees. To enhance the comparability across programs and locations, all resources were valued using national (not local) 2023 prices. Median wages as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics were used for staff costs (tutors, school coordinators, teachers, principals, etc.) inflated by a small multiplier to reflect hiring costs. Durable resources (such as space, furniture, and equipment) were priced from national suppliers and were annualized over their expected useful lives at a 3.5 percent rate. The total annual program cost in a school was then divided by the number of students who attended at least one session, yielding per-student costs.

Notes and References

1. For eight program types there were only one or two schools implementing that type of tutoring, so all were selected. In New Mexico, because there was only one program type implemented statewide and that program served a uniquely wide range of schools in terms of locales and demographics, three schools were selected so that New Mexico was not underrepresented in the cost sample.
2. Henry M. Levin, Patrick J. McEwan, Clive Belfield, A. Brooks Bowden, and Robert Shand, *Economic Evaluation in Education: Cost-Effectiveness and Benefit-Cost Analysis* (Sage Publications, 2017).