

The Future of Expanded Learning Opportunities Research | Learning Recovery Research Brief

The RESTART Network conducted a systematic review of studies and other resources for information on the actions taken, policies adopted, and strategies implemented to address the needs of students and educators in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of the RESTART Network's ongoing scan and synthesis is to provide PK–12 policymakers and practitioners with the most up-to-date information on expanded learning opportunities (e.g., tutoring activities).

This brief provides an overview of the studies and resources published between March 2020 and March 2024.

At a Glance: Tutoring Strategies to Recover From Pandemic-Related Learning Loss

Students have experienced ongoing learning loss due to the pandemic. Educators have been implementing or expanding a range of academic interventions to support the specific needs of students who have fallen behind. **Schools have leaned heavily on tutoring initiatives to provide personalized instruction to students.** Our review suggests that tutoring took many shapes and forms.

We aimed to identify evaluations of the strategies and activities being implemented in schools to understand what strategies were being implemented to recover from the pandemic and document any evaluation of those strategies.

RESTART Network Scan and Synthesis

1,512 studies were **reviewed** for inclusion.

182 studies were **considered**.

44 of the studies were **reviewed** as including at least one tutoring recovery activity.



How Schools Implemented Tutoring in the Wake of the Pandemic

To assist students in recovering from pandemic-related learning loss, schools and districts invested heavily in tutoring services. Although few studies report on the effectiveness of tutoring as a pandemic recovery strategy, many studies describe the implementation of tutoring for pandemic recovery. **Tutoring strategies vary in design features that likely contributed to the degree of effectiveness. School and district leaders considering tutoring strategies should evaluate the following factors within a program:**

- **Program Fit.** Consider the fit of the tutoring solution to the school in terms of resources, staff, time, and space rather than a tutoring-for-all or one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Program Focus and Format.** Tutoring programs should focus on content that aligns with specific students' needs. Successful formats vary including delivery models (in person or virtual), program size, and dosage amounts.
- **Student Recruitment and Participation.** School criteria for targeting students for participation plays an important role within the implementation process of tutoring interventions. Tutoring needs to be aligned to student needs and be accessible to students in terms of the timing (during the school day, after school, summer).
- **Implementation Challenges.** Implementation challenges for tutoring programs include recruitment barriers, sustainable funding, and the level of buy-in from key stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, families, and students.

Current Evidence-Based Practices

The What Works Clearinghouse reviewed 16 studies evaluating tutoring strategies and found mixed results in their success in improving student outcomes. Half of these studies were found to have uncertain impacts on student outcomes. Of these 16 studies, **three studies were published since the pandemic onset (2020) and two studies show strong evidence of effectiveness**.^{1,2} Only three of the tutoring-focused studies indicate that at least one finding shows strong evidence of effectiveness. The table below provides an overview of the two studies demonstrating strong evidence for improving student outcomes.

Call to Action for Researchers: Given the limited amount of rigorous research on the effectiveness of tutoring strategies during the pandemic recovery context, more research evaluating tutoring design features, implementation, and impact is needed to guide current recovery investment and future decision-making and evidence-based practices for learning recovery.

Evidence-Based Tutoring Studies Reviewed by the WWC Since 2020

STUDY NAME	TARGET POPULATION	OUTCOME	LEVEL OF EVIDENCE
Web-Based Intelligent Tutoring for the Structure Strategy (ITSS) for Adolescent Literacy (2020) This report evaluated two studies: Wijekumar et al. (2012) and Wijekumar et al. (2017)	Students in Grades 4–5 and 7, from two states in the U.S.	Reaching comprehension	 STRONG
Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Volunteer One-on-One Tutoring Model for Early Elementary Reading Intervention: A Randomized Controlled Trial Replication Study (Markovitz et al., 2022)	At-risk students in Grades K–3, specifically in Wisconsin and Minnesota	Alphabetics	 PROMISING
		Literacy achievement	 PROMISING
		Reading fluency	 STRONG

From the RESTART Network

The [Metro Atlanta Recovery and Acceleration](#) research team, one of the RESTART Network research teams, partnered with [Clayton County Public Schools \(CCPS\)](#) to examine the relationship between the use of Tutor.com and student achievement growth using formative test scores. In the 2021–22 school year, CCPS began using the virtual tutoring platform to provide one-on-one, on-demand virtual tutoring sessions to students in the district. Student participation was voluntary and low. In general, the extent of Tutor.com usage was not correlated with student achievement gains, although evidence suggests that high-intensity use could yield gains in math achievement. The precise causal relationship between usage and student achievement is unclear because students chose their level of Tutor.com use. Integrating the use of virtual tutoring into the school day would be the most direct way to promote usage.

Learning Recovery Efforts Interactive Map

The RESTART Network’s [Learning Recovery Efforts Interactive Map](#) provides an overview of learning recovery research and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) plans across the United States.

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners will find this map valuable for understanding the current landscape of pandemic-related education research and how states addressed ESSER plans and strategies.



¹ These two studies were rated *Meets WWC Standards Without Reservations* and had a Tier 1 rating.
² See Table 22 on page 131: What Works Clearinghouse. (2022). *Procedures and standards handbook, version 5.0*. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/referenceresources/Final_WWC-HandbookVer5_0-0-508.pdf

