Providing Effective Tutoring

Center on Instruction

Tutoring is generally understood as instruction beyond what is provided in a normal school day. Tutoring may occur during non-instructional periods of the school day, before or after school, or during weekends. It often occurs in small group settings and may focus on remediating missing skills, assisting with homework, or, for students not at risk or struggling, on extending learning (e.g., SAT preparation). For struggling students, tutoring often addresses the first two of these three purposes. In terms of purpose one (remediating missing skills), and particularly for older struggling students, tutoring "fills in" skills students need to perform at or above grade-level expectations. For younger students, tutoring may also be effective in *preventing* later skill gaps, if at-risk students are identified early in their school careers and provided with effective early intervention (see "Identifying Students in Need of Support or Intervention," elsewhere in this *Handbook*). Whatever its context or purpose, tutoring represents a means of increasing intensity, including instructional time and instructional focus (e.g., smaller groups, homogenous grouping, and direct instruction of skills). Peer tutoring models (Fuchs et al., 2001) and the use of well-trained paraprofessionals and volunteers (Foorman & Al Otaiba, 2009; Morris, 2006) represent promising, cost-efficient models for increasing intensity.

Action Principles

For State

1. Establish "validated curricula" and specify professional development requirements for paraprofessionals. LEAs and schools may benefit from professional development on the effective use and management of paraprofessionals and volunteers for tutoring (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000).

2. Review policies regulating the use of non-instructional time (e.g., recess time and special areas time). LEAs and schools may need guidance on providing small-group tutoring opportunities during the regular school day.

For District

1. Peer tutoring as a validated intervention requires considerable teacher skill to be effective; provide intensive and ongoing professional development on peer tutoring. (Fuchs et al., 2001).

2. Provide guidance to building administrators and instructional leaders on how to identify effective tutoring, whether delivered by volunteers, paraprofessionals, or peers.

3. Provide support and guidance to building administrators and instructional leaders on correcting poorly conceived tutoring strategies, remedying ineffective application of tutoring strategies, and modeling effective tutoring practices.

For School

1. Support the hiring and monitoring of paraprofessional tutors, recruiting and screening volunteer tutors, and supporting teachers who implement peer tutoring. All three groups need guidance on procedures for managing these functions.

2. Align tutoring content with student needs and with classroom-provided instruction to yield the best results (Elbaum et al., 2000).

References and Resources

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