A Framework for Tutoring Services
A Technical Report submitted to the Toledo Community Foundation[1]

May 2017

Executive Summary

The need for high-quality academic resources in our community is very real. 84.8% of K-3 TPS students — over 3,200 children — are struggling to improve their literary proficiency, and no more than 12% of students are currently receiving tutoring assistance.[2]

The metropolitan Toledo region has an opportunity — and an obligation — to address this gap. By pursuing an approach based on collective impact, we can develop, offer and sustain high-performing tutoring programs, expanding possibilities while maximizing potential funding streams.

The Importance of High-Quality Tutoring

In developing the approach outlined in this report, it was first essential to define high-quality tutoring, which is the intentional instruction that empowers students to fulfill their academic potential.

While there are nearly 170 metro Toledo programs that have self-identified tutoring as part of their mission, the clear majority of those organizations define tutoring broadly, and few have tutoring as their primary objective. The implementation of tutoring best practices can only complement these organization's important missions of mentoring, recreation, childcare and child safety.

The Need to Expand Capacities

Optimizing access to funding is critical. While high-performing national tutoring programs secure over $900 per student on average, Toledo programs obtain less than $300 per student. Due to a less centralized approach, programs in this region generally struggle to attract funding from national sources. By closing this funding gap, consolidating and maximizing existing resources, and expanding the influence of current tutoring programs, we have an opportunity to advance efficiencies across the community and deliver an exceptional tutoring experience for our youth.

It is also imperative that we leverage these programs to increase our outreach. While national programs on average serve an average of 173 students, most Lucas County organizations serve fewer than 75 students, and most only reach 10 to 30 students. In addition, sustainability issues threaten the livelihood of even highly successful organizations. Ideally, a staff-to-student ratio of 1:8.3 is recommended.

A Unified Approach

By implementing a centralized, consistent system, a community can provide oversight, as well as manage program funding and resource allocation. The Toledo community is exploring a system to optimize the success of tutoring programs throughout the region.

Our investigation, grounded in research of best tutoring practices and based on exemplary national programs, includes the following approaches and solutions:
1. A model that combines funders, programs, and outcomes into a centralized system driven by academic performance
2. Information for funders about program outcomes and the program's effectiveness in meeting shared community expectations
3. Support for tutoring programs, enabling them to build capacity toward outcomes and sustainability

Research from national and local studies concludes that a collective impact approach engages key stakeholders while aligning and strengthening existing coalitions and networks. Through this approach, high-performing, sustainable, coordinated after-school tutoring programs can be established.

The set of standards we recommend emphasizes real-time communication and partnership between schools, tutors and coordinators, as well as cultural competency, continuous staff improvement and effective data-driven funding.

Benefits for Students, Organizations and the Community

The successful development of a comprehensive, centralized, community-wide tutoring system features characteristics based on best practices, including the following:
1. Shared understanding and expectations of quality
2. Reduction in duplication, inefficiencies, and competition
3. Maximization of resources
4. Sharing of data between programs and schools
5. Effectiveness in reaching more children

Coordinated, centralized program models create access to funding sources that many programs are unable to secure individually. By sharing data and presenting as a unified entity, programs are able to demonstrate a greater collective impact and increase access that is unavailable to stand-alone programs.

Data collected in situations where similar programs have been implemented demonstrate striking outcomes for students, including improved literacy, greater academic achievement, better attendance, and increased engagement.

Conclusion: A Better Process for Better Outcomes

In summation, adopting and following the framework demonstrated in this report will facilitate greater success by developing, implementing and sustaining a community-wide high-quality tutoring program. Our recommended approach is as follows:

- Establish and communicate the common vision

- Engage key stakeholders to strengthen, link and align coalitions and networks
- Move forward with one coordinating body
- Adopt best practices and recommendations for high-performing tutoring programs
    - Develop enhanced tutoring skill sets
    - Create uniform tracking metrics
    - Establish student performance goals
    - Adopt data-driven decision-making process
    - Align policies and prioritize the use of resources
- Leverage and expand both existing and potential funding sources
    - Create dedicated local funding streams
    - Optimize existing funding streams
    - Maximize federal and state funding
- Clearly share and convey benefits of membership to community and organizations
    - Organizations gain access to expanded resources and services
    - Parents can identify high-quality programs that achieve their metrics
    - Funders can determine high-performing, sustainable programs

By developing the following approach:
- Initiate a community-wide tutoring structure with a centralized coordinating organization
- Leverage high performing tutoring program best practices
- Enact a funding strategy that attracts new state and national funding while maximizing existing streams
- Create data system for continuous improvement

The following goals can be accomplished:
- Improve 3rd grade literacy by 35% over the next 3 to 5 years
- Increase participation from 12% to 30% over the next 3 to 5 years
- Increase funding from $300 to $900 per student over the next 3 to 5 years

By creating greater programmatic and administrative alignment over time, this approach can be implemented on a graduated timeline that optimizes resources most effectively.

- Build a centralized, city-wide model, relying on a tiered participation structure
    - Tier 1
        - Organizations meet basic quality standards
        - Partners receive professional training and data
    - Tier 2
        - Organizations meet intermediate to high quality standards
        - Partners receive funding access, professional training & data
    - Tier 3
        - Organizations meet high quality standards
        - Partners serve as a site of the centralized tutoring program

- Set a timeline for implementation of timeline
    - Phase 1 (Years 1-3): Establish K-6 Reading
    - Phase 2 (Years 3-5): Add 7-12 Math
    - Phase 3 (Years 4-5): Incorporate Summer Learning