



Leveraging the Federal Work-Study Program for P-12 Tutoring

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Students Struggled Before COVID, Even More After	1
About Federal Work Study	1
High-Dosage Tutoring: The Challenge of Delivering at Scale	1
The Call to Action for P–12 Student Support.	2
Emerging Initiatives	4
George Washington University	4
Grand Valley State University.	5
Step Up Tutoring	6
Salisbury University	6
Spelman College.	7
Teach for America - Ignite Fellowship	8
Implementation Considerations	9
Benefits of FWS College Students Recipients Working as Tutors in P–12	9
Recruiting and Wages.	9
Creating Peer Communities for Tutors.	10
The Challenges of Coordinating and Administering College Tutors for P–12.	11
Managing Administrative Complexities	11
Finding the Time: Overcoming Scheduling Issues.	12
Optimizing Federal Work-Study for High Community Impact	13
Recommendations	15
Resources	15

Leveraging the Federal Work-Study Program to Fund High-Impact Tutoring in P–12 Schools

Introduction

The Federal Work-Study program has provided financial aid and work experience to lower-income college students for nearly 60 years. In this white paper, we examine Federal Work-Study (FWS) as a funding source for placing college students in P–12 student support roles such as tutoring, coaching, and mentoring as outlined by the National Partnership for Student Success (NPSS). We interviewed leaders at higher education institutions (HEIs) and nonprofit organizations who are using FWS or in the process of leveraging it for high-dosage tutoring roles in P–12 school districts. Because FWS already operates nationally and is a stable source of funding that can be used for community service roles, HEIs and nonprofits view FWS as an important, but often under-utilized tool to scale tutoring programs nationally.

We begin by providing a brief overview of COVID-19 pandemic impacts on P–12 students' academic progress and the federal government's call to action to scale tutoring and student support services across the nation. We then introduce stories of several nonprofit and higher education institutions at various stages of using FWS for support tutoring roles. This is followed by discussion of the benefits and challenges of implementing FWS for tutoring and P–12 student support roles. Finally, we offer recommendations aimed at optimizing use of the FWS program for high-dosage tutoring roles.

Students Struggled Before COVID, Even More After

Students in P–12, especially students from high-poverty communities, were struggling academically before the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2012 to 2020, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) tracked steady declines in math and reading scores. In 2023, the NAEP saw the largest declines in math since assessments began in the 1970s (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). The pandemic widened the opportunity gap for all students, but in particular Black, Latinx, and students from low-income families, according to the National Partnership for Student Success.

Tutoring has long been recognized by educators as a proven method to help P–12 students accelerate their learning

(Guryan & Ludwig, 2023). A 2020 meta-analysis of tutoring interventions revealed that tutoring programs “yield consistent and substantial impacts on learning outcomes” (Nickow et al., 2020). Tutoring, however, has traditionally been available only for those students whose families could afford it. According to education scholars, past efforts to scale tutoring nationally failed in part because they relied primarily on volunteers and put the burden on parents and guardians to connect their children with tutors. With pandemic-induced learning interruptions mounting, the federal government included funds in COVID-19 relief aid for states and districts to use for tutoring programs. However, that federal funding is expected to end in 2024.

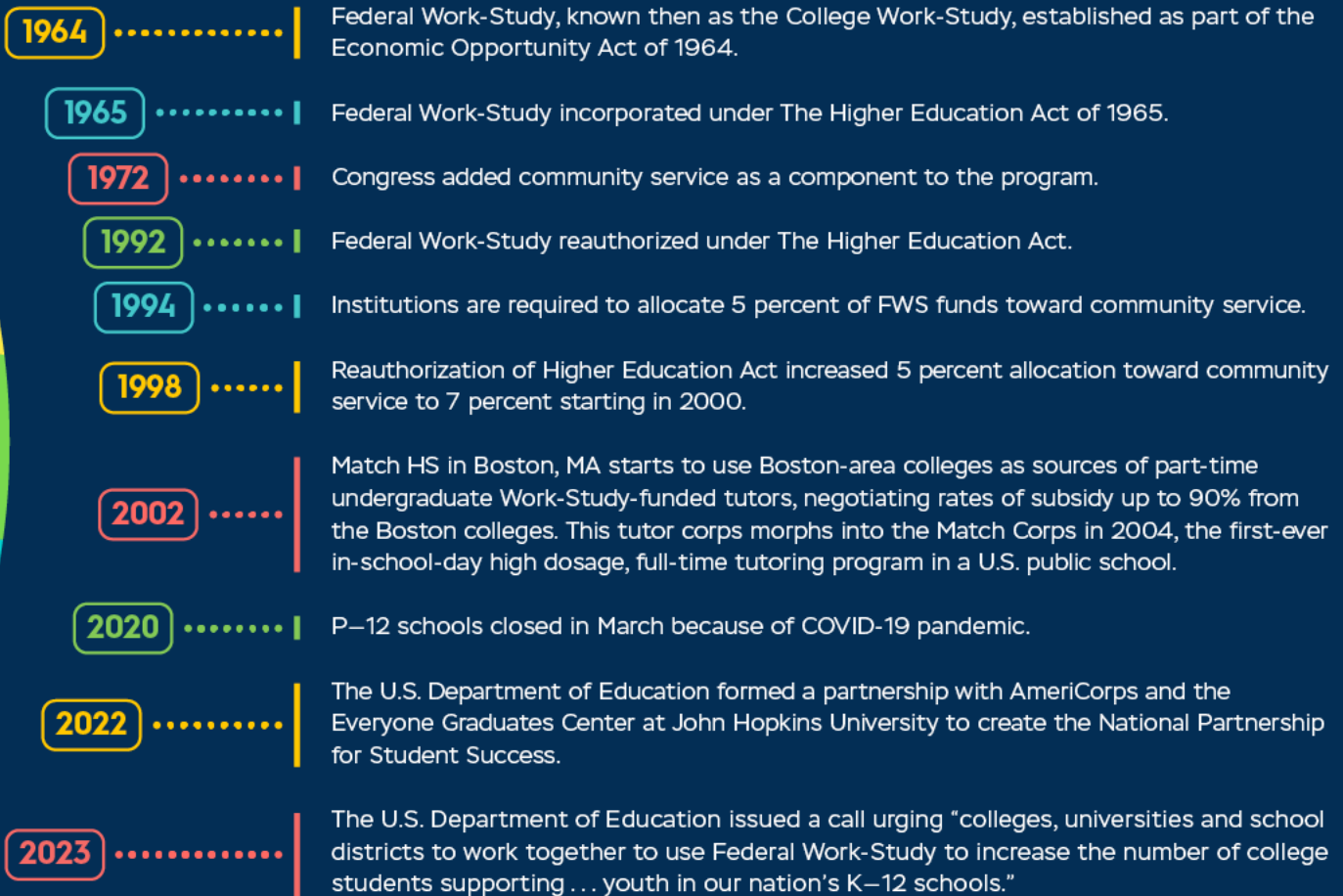
About Federal Work-Study

High-Dosage Tutoring: The Challenge of Delivering at Scale

“Millennia of history in delivering education combined with a large set of rigorous, gold-standard RCT evaluations suggests tutoring is an effective pedagogical tool,” says Brown University economist Matthew A. Kraft. “The real challenge we are all facing is what does it mean to scale [tutoring in K–12 public schools] and can we deliver it at scale.” One way to scale tutoring beyond 2024 is to use existing programs such as the Federal Work-Study program. Research has shown that high-dosage, individualized tutoring delivered during the school day where a student meets with a trained tutor daily can generate up to two and a half years of learning in a year (Nickow et al., 2020).

The Federal Work-Study program was created when the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was signed into law. The law's aim was to “stimulate and promote the part-time employment of students in institutions of higher education who are from low-income families and are in need of the earnings from such employment to pursue courses of study at such institutions.” The provisions for Federal Work-Study have been updated and reauthorized over the years. In 2000, Congress introduced a mandate for colleges and universities to devote 7 percent of FWS funds to community service activities.

TIMELINE OF FEDERAL WORK-STUDY MILESTONES

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- 1964** | Federal Work-Study, known then as the College Work-Study, established as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.
 - 1965** | Federal Work-Study incorporated under The Higher Education Act of 1965.
 - 1972** | Congress added community service as a component to the program.
 - 1992** | Federal Work-Study reauthorized under The Higher Education Act.
 - 1994** | Institutions are required to allocate 5 percent of FWS funds toward community service.
 - 1998** | Reauthorization of Higher Education Act increased 5 percent allocation toward community service to 7 percent starting in 2000.
 - 2002** | Match HS in Boston, MA starts to use Boston-area colleges as sources of part-time undergraduate Work-Study-funded tutors, negotiating rates of subsidy up to 90% from the Boston colleges. This tutor corps morphs into the Match Corps in 2004, the first-ever in-school-day high dosage, full-time tutoring program in a U.S. public school.
 - 2020** | P–12 schools closed in March because of COVID-19 pandemic.
 - 2022** | The U.S. Department of Education formed a partnership with AmeriCorps and the Everyone Graduates Center at John Hopkins University to create the National Partnership for Student Success.
 - 2023** | The U.S. Department of Education issued a call urging “colleges, universities and school districts to work together to use Federal Work-Study to increase the number of college students supporting . . . youth in our nation’s K–12 schools.”

(Sources: National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' Federal Work-Study Research: Literature Review & Policy Scan, 2016 & U.S. Department of Education website)

In “A Blueprint for Scaling Tutoring Across Public Schools,” Kraft and co-author Grace T. Falken identify Federal Work-Study as an attractive funding source for scaling tutoring nationally in the public education system (Kraft & Falken, 2020). Kraft and Falken noted that previous attempts to scale tutoring failed because “federal initiatives placed high demands on schools and families to coordinate tutoring while providing limited funding and support.” Federal Work-Study, Kraft explains, is a program that already operates at scale and includes tutoring-like activities within its guidelines as qualifying ways students can earn work-study wages. “It’s attractive because of the scale of students receiving [these funds] – hundreds of thousands of students – and there are already mechanisms to pivot to school tutoring,” he says. The federal government spends about \$1 billion annually on the program and around

600,000 undergraduate and graduate students receive benefits (Community College Research Center, 2021). Yet Federal Work-Study allocations have remained flat since 2000 and tutoring remains a small piece of the program. In 2017-18, reading and math tutors employed through the FWS program nationwide represented slightly more than 5 percent of FWS allocation, according to the U.S. Department of Education’s 2019 Federal Campus-Based Programs Data Book.

The Call to Action for P–12 Student Support

In March 2022, President Biden issued a call to action during his State of the Union address for more Americans to serve as tutors and mentors to public school students. In July 2022, the U.S. Department of Education formed a partnership with AmeriCorps and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns

Hopkins University to create the National Partnership for Student Success, an effort to engage an additional 250,000 adults in roles serving as tutors, mentors, success coaches, and other roles supporting K–12 public school students by 2025 (Biden-Harris Administration Calls on Colleges, 2023).

In May 2023, the U.S. Department of Education issued a call to action urging “colleges, universities and school districts to work together to use Federal Work-Study to increase the number of college students supporting . . . youth in our nation’s K–12 schools.” It also called for colleges and universities to prioritize using FWS funds for 1) job-related roles and career experiences for students; and 2) public service roles that support school-aged students in classrooms and community settings. In particular, “the Department is calling on colleges and universities to set a public goal to, within the next two years: use at least 15 percent of their FWS funds to compensate college students employed in community service activities, devoting any increase in FWS compensation for community service to employment in NPSS roles located in schools or out-of-school time programs; or significantly increase the number of college students in NPSS roles regardless of the

funding source supporting these roles” (Biden-Harris Administration Calls on Colleges, 2023). The National Partnership for Student Success announced in May 2023 that a cohort of 26 colleges and universities had committed to voluntarily use at least 15 percent of FWS funds for high-impact tutoring partnerships with P–12 public schools.

Based on a representative survey of public school principals administered by the RAND Corporation in 2023, the NPSS estimates that the country is about 75 percent of the way towards meeting the Biden-Harris Administration’s goal of recruiting an additional 250,000 people into high-impact student support roles by 2025 (2022-23 NPSS Principals Survey, 2023).

“We see college students as a crucial additional source of people power that can be supportive to districts,” says Mariko Yoshisato Cavey, Director of Higher Education Partnerships, NPSS. “A number of our coalition members have been pleasantly surprised by how many applicants they have gotten for these roles, nearly doubling the amount that they had expected to place in P–12 [student support roles].”

Federal Work-Study Students Employed as Reading Tutors

Award Year 2017 - 18

Institution Type & Control	Number of Recipients	Federal Share	Institution Share	Total	Average Earnings
Public 2-Year	3,550	\$6,696,802	\$374,707	\$7,071,509	\$1,992
Public 4-Year	9,693	\$16,203,330	\$672,612	\$16,875,942	\$1,741
Private 2-Year	1,187	\$1,295,393	\$77,408	\$1,372,801	\$1,157
Private 4-Year	12,316	\$15,364,668	\$893,730	\$16,258,398	\$1,320
Proprietary 2-Year	384	\$615,541	\$32,997	\$648,538	\$1,689
Proprietary 4-Year	399	\$828,537	\$36,826	\$865,363	\$2,169
U.S. Total	27,529	\$41,004,271	\$2,088,280	\$43,092,551	\$1,565

Institutions	2,832	2,832	725	2,832	
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Note: Number of institutions represents schools that reported these FWS account transactions.

Source: 2019 Federal Campus-Based Programs Data Book, U.S. Department of Education.

Federal Work-Study Students Employed as Math Tutors

Award Year 2017 - 18

Institution Type & Control	Number of Recipients	Federal Share	Institution Share	Total	Average Earnings
Public 2-Year	784	\$1,423,414	\$123,755	\$1,547,169	\$1,973
Public 4-Year	3,145	\$4,367,301	\$171,767	\$4,539,068	\$1,443
Private 2-Year	225	\$208,465	\$3,827	\$212,292	\$944
Private 4-Year	3,002	\$3,148,146	\$303,709	\$3,451,855	\$1,150
Proprietary 2-Year	23	\$21,729	\$2,476	\$24,205	\$1,052
Proprietary 4-Year	38	\$63,127	\$1,097	\$64,224	\$1,690
U.S. Total	7,217	\$9,232,182	\$606,631	\$9,838,813	\$1,363

Institutions	702	702	181	702
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Note: Number of institutions represents schools that reported these FWS account transactions.

Source: 2019 Federal Campus-Based Programs Data Book, U.S. Department of Education.

In the following section, we introduce several examples of higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations leveraging Federal Work-Study programs or in the process of exploring its use for funding and staffing P–12 student support roles such as tutoring.

Emerging Initiatives

George Washington University

At George Washington University, Amy Cohen serves as Assistant Vice Provost and Executive Director of the Honey W. Nashman Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service. Cohen has been in service learning and civic engagement throughout her career, having worked in the federal government during the rise of the America Reads program started under the Clinton administration. Designed to have all third graders read at grade level, America Reads sparked a commission bringing college presidents' together to discuss ways to support this education goal, which led to an increase in Federal Work-Study.



"When I came to GW, there were a number of already existing service programs," Cohen says. SMART DC, which stands for Student Math and Reading Tutoring, was formerly DC Reads and has worked with nonprofits for the last 30 years in DC schools.

In 2022, as the pandemic was coming to a close, an education intermediary nonprofit, CityTutor DC, reached out to Cohen to partner on launching a high-impact math tutoring program. Cohen says she enthusiastically agreed to the partnership and went to a new model of training and development, working with the GW Teach program, which offers a minor to STEM students who are interested in teaching and puts them on a path toward licensure in DC.

“We developed a one-credit class where GW faculty who are math experts teach our students over the course of a semester. They focus on teaching the curriculum developed for the tutoring program,” Cohen explains. “Students are allowed to take this class up to three times, so they deepen their practice each time.” The faculty member who teaches the course developed the curriculum in partnership with DC public school teachers and the DC public schools math curriculum lead.

The program currently has 80 part-time tutors serving between 250 and 300 middle school students in six schools, identified by the district as those most in need of academic support.

Cohen says she had support from the math department to recruit tutors, which happened “very, very quickly.” She also worked with the university’s student employment office to list which programs qualify for work-study positions. The program also applied for American Recovery Plan funding through the Office of the State Superintendent for Education in Washington, DC. That funding also helps support school coordinators for the tutoring programs.

Cohen is looking at ways to sustain the program without ARP funds, which are expected to expire in 2024. “Federal Work-Study is covered 100 percent for tutoring, but it still takes coordination, management, and staffing to do this. What we will need money for is a program manager to manage all the logistics around the program,” she says. “We will need funding for the course that continues to be taught around this, and then we would love some travel money [for the college students to travel to the school sites].”

Grand Valley State University

Steven Hodas is Executive Director at the GV NextEd Co-Lab at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. Hodas came to his role in June 2021.



“Our tutoring work started in a very ad hoc way,” Hodas explains. “It was a homework help line where we matched tutors with students. It was purely on-demand from families.”

The program called K–12 Connect quickly evolved and Grand Valley State University productized the curriculum, training and professional development. Hodas says the K–12 Connect program quickly worked out how to improve recruitment and training while becoming more efficient. Grand Valley State has about 20,000 undergraduate students. The program hires between 300 and 1,000 tutors a semester and is an approved vendor for several out-of-state programs.

“In less than a year, we became the largest employer of work-study students [at our university], and that was before President Biden announced his goal [of 250,000 adults supporting K–12 public school students by 2025],” Hodas says. “We are now recruiting kids from several dozen other higher ed institutions.”

A key feature of the program is that it is primarily offered as live-online tutoring. “The vast majority of our work is online,” Hodas says. “I had hoped and pushed to do it more in person by now, but in most districts, it’s easier for the school to implement an online program because of the internal issues, space management, just the way schools work.”

Hodas distinguishes his university's live, online high-dosage tutoring from online, on-demand tutoring. K–12 Connect offers twice weekly, 60-minute sessions for reading, math and mentoring. K–12 Connect clients have the option of one-on-one tutoring as well as in small groups, virtual and in-person. Initially tutor training includes Saga Education's Saga Coach, as well as subject-specific, DEI, and science-based practices. All tutors receive ongoing training and coaching throughout their service.

Federal Work-Study structures also align with Grand Valley State's commitments to social justice, inclusion, and community goals. "We skew heavily toward work-study kids in part because of the social mission," Hodas says. "We're also aware that this can be part of a teacher pipeline program. We've had many of our tutors change their majors to education as a result of the tutoring experience. We need more educators and we certainly need more educators of color."

Step Up Tutoring

California-based Step Up Tutoring was founded in 2020 as a volunteer homework help-based tutoring program for K–12 students during the pandemic in partnership with Los Angeles Unified School District, the second-largest school district in the nation. Upon its founding, Step Up signed a 5-year MOU with LAUSD. The organization evolved from that initial volunteer program to a true high-impact tutoring model, according to its CEO. Step Up Tutoring adopted a math curriculum focused on math for grades 3–6 and has launched different tutoring modes including in-school and after-school options serving students from low-income households and working primarily with Title I schools, those with over 90 percent free and reduced lunch eligibility. To date, Step Up Tutoring has served over 3,000 students in LAUSD and 5 other district and charter partners.

"One of the key things we've done as we evolved into a high-impact tutoring provider is focus on being cost effective," says Sam Olivieri, CEO of Step Up Tutoring. "We have found adult volunteers that are well qualified and well trained to be really consistent and effective. There's a lot of potential in recruiting undergraduate students to serve as high-impact tutors."

Step Up worked with Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Annenberg Learner, and other tutoring providers to develop a set of training courses for tutors to earn a micro-credential from ASU (Step Up Tutoring, 2023). The nonprofit became a Federal Work-Study provider and works with 16 different college campuses in California.



"We've launched this tutor training effort that is focused on building competencies and skills of novice tutors," Olivieri says. Other tutoring providers including Teach for America Ignite, On Your Mark Tutoring, Grand Valley State University are participating in piloting implementation of the new training program. The National Student Support Accelerator based at Stanford University is the group's research and evaluation partner.

Salisbury University

Laurie Henry is Dean of the Seidel School of Education at Salisbury University, located in Wicomico County on the eastern shore of Maryland. Salisbury University has partnerships with 44 schools across seven districts, Henry says. In October 2023, the Maryland Department of Education awarded funds to Wicomico County Public Schools as part of its Maryland Tutoring Corps Grant Program (Maryland State Department of Education, 2023). Because of their strong partnership with Wicomico County Public Schools, Henry says the district came to Salisbury University to partner on the grant proposal to recruit and employ at least 30 tutors.



When the National Partnership for Student Success launched the initiative to leverage Federal Work-Study students into these roles, Henry says it made sense to partner since the university was already engaged in this kind of work. Though the university has a long history with AmeriCorps (since 1995), its use of Federal Work-Study for tutoring is more recent.

“Once we have the Maryland Tutoring Corps Grant up and running, my hope is that we’ll have students who are not necessarily education majors who will become part of the tutoring corps,” she says. “I really see it as an opportunity to build a pipeline that doesn’t currently exist for math and STEM majors who hadn’t considered teaching as a career goal.”

Spelman College

Jilo Tisdale, M.Ed., is director of the Bonner Office of Civic Engagement at Spelman College. Spelman is one of 51 schools in the Bonner National Network. Collectively, these Bonner schools work towards transforming students, communities, and campuses through service. Spelman was one of the first 11 schools to join the Bonner Network in 1991 following a successful pilot year of the Bonner Scholar Program at Berea College. Students invited to join the Bonner Scholar Program receive scholarship support in exchange for their commitment to intensive and meaningful service of 10 hours a week with a local community organization during all four years of their undergraduate studies. In addition to their service, Bonner

students engage in training on leadership development and social justice topics to encourage them to become aware of how the problems and issues of their communities influence their service work and public policy. The Bonner Program is designed to transform not only the students who are directly supported by the program, but also the campus and community in which they serve and learn. Bonner students emerge from their college experience with a greater understanding of communities and the problems that exist within them, as well as the skills and commitment to be effective in community problem-solving efforts (<http://www.bonner.org/apply>).

Spelman has a strong commitment to community service as a vehicle to leadership and civic engagement for all students. “We have a community service graduation requirement at Spelman College – 24 hours for all students,” Tisdale says. “The requirement is designed for those hours to be completed during the first and second years of matriculation. The intent is to get students involved in meaningful community experiences early so they understand what it’s like to give back and see the impact they can make. Then they want to keep doing it even when they don’t have to. Our goal is to get them involved as first year students. We want to get them hooked on an issue, an agency and the good feelings that come from contributing to the common good, so they’ll stay engaged in the community for the rest of their lives.”

In 2017, following a conversation with local school principals where they identified literacy as an area needing additional support, Spelman College launched SpelREADS, a literacy intervention designed to contribute to improved literacy outcomes for Atlanta Public School students. Since then, the program’s tutors, Spelman students known as “Reading Guides,” have served almost 1,000 K–8 students in the Atlanta community. In 2022-2023, the program served over 200 students, most living in the neighborhoods near Spelman’s campus and attending schools in the Booker T. Washington High School cluster of the Atlanta Public School System. Booker T. Washington was the first public high school for Black students in Georgia. Tisdale attributes the success of SpelREADS, in part, to having the Spelman College President and Board of Trustees champion the program.

Spelman uses BookNook, a research-based, adaptive learning platform for program delivery and data collection. Reflecting

on early discussions with BookNook, Tisdale says, “College students doing the tutoring wasn’t their model, but they were willing to talk about it and to work with us,” During the pandemic, BookNook was nimble enough to adapt to virtual program delivery and Spelman continued the program using Zoom. SpelREADS began transitioning back to in-person delivery during the spring 2021 semester and maintained a hybrid delivery model until fall 2022 when all sites resumed in-person program delivery.

“We were hybrid until fall 2022 with some of our schools preferring to keep programming virtual,” Tisdale says.

“There were some positives about the virtual delivery model – it allowed us to serve schools that were further away geographically and that we can’t realistically service face to face because of the time it takes to get Spelman students there and the cost of providing transportation.”

In addition to transportation, program costs for SpelREADS include stipends paid to student tutors for their time/effort and wages paid to program staff. In September 2023, Spelman began exploring the use of Federal Work-Study as a funding source for the stipends paid to tutors. Prior to this, all program costs were covered by a combination of Spelman’s institutional investment and external grants.

“It became obvious to us that if we wanted to continue to grow, we’d have to staff this right,” Tisdale says. “Once we had 250 tutors and seven sites, the question was, ‘How do we staff this?’ Where do we get stable funds for staffing, stipends, and transportation?” Engaging work-study students as Reading Guides and applying Federal work-study funds to offset the cost of stipends for those student tutors will allow Spelman’s Bonner Office to direct institutional and grant funds toward transportation and staffing costs.

“The work-study funding available to employ students for efforts in K–12 schools is an important opportunity. It’s more stable than most private and foundation grants,” Tisdale says, before sharing that the result of a major grant ending in October 2023 will make for a “much smaller SpelREADS program” during the spring 2024. A full-time staff position had to be eliminated, the number of tutors had to be significantly reduced, and transportation remains a concern.



“We continue to look for other resources,” she says. “Work-study isn’t a magic bullet and it’s not an easy lift, but I think the potential benefits are worth pursuing.”

Teach for America - Ignite Fellowship

Katie Tennessen Hooten is Founder and Senior Vice President of the Ignite Fellowship at Teach For America. Hooten says Teach For America is exploring the possibility of using Federal Work-Study as a way to continue growing access to high-dosage tutoring in partnership with universities, especially as ESSER funding winds down.

Hooten has experience scaling Teach For America’s national Ignite Fellowship, which started in the fall 2020 with 8 school partners and 100 fellows who serve as tutors. A fully virtual, high-dosage tutoring program—offered during school hours—the program has grown to serve schools in 22 states with literacy tutoring for grades K–3 and math tutoring for grades 5–8. “We’ve found that the virtual delivery model is a strategic way to scale access to customized learning opportunities for students across the 28 different communities we’re partnering with right now,” she says. “Our virtual program creates the conditions for high-dosage tutoring to reach thousands of students in rural and urban communities across the country.”

Teach For America recruits, selects, and matches nearly 1,500 college students from over 300 colleges and universities to partner with students each semester as Ignite fellows. Because

of this scale, Hooten sees an opportunity to create conditions that would make it more feasible to access Federal Work-Study dollars to unlock sustainability for tutoring programs.



“We are in conversation with a handful of universities right now to understand how their Federal Work-Study programs operate at their institutions and how we could partner,” Hooten says. “Our hope is that institutions’ commitments to community service through FWS could be a strategic pathway to continue investing in tutoring initiatives once ESSER funds expire without putting the funding burden on schools, whose budgets are already extremely tight.”

Implementation Considerations

Benefits of FWS College Students Recipients

Working as Tutors in P–12

According to the Campus Compact’s “Earn, Learn, and Serve” guide, one of the biggest benefits of Federal Work-Study is that it allows low-income college students who need to work while going to school to participate in community service programs (Earn, Learn, Serve, 2008). Several studies point to high starting salaries for students who worked during college and note that FWS may “accelerate development growth and career competency” in college students (Leonard et al., 2021).

“Tutoring can be a rewarding experience,” Kraft says. “You get to know a young student and get to see their eyes light up when

they have success on an assignment. That is gratifying and improves students’ self-efficacy and they can feel more connected to the community.”

Because they are near-peers, college students who serve as tutors in K–12 public schools can help build relationships with younger students and keep them engaged in learning (Townsend & Tisdale, 2023). “One of the neat things about having college students in P–12 tutoring, mentoring and coaching roles is these students are coming from all sorts of academic departments and professional pathways. That helps expose younger students to the opportunities that might exist at their local colleges,” says Cavey.

For many P–12 students, Olivieri says it’s a “big draw for them that they could be tutored by a college student. It’s really easy for them to make connections and build relationships.”

At Spelman, participation in SpeIREADS benefits both college students and P–12 students. P–12 students benefit from tutoring, but also from seeing college students who are of similar racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

College students experience increased motivation, Tisdale says, as “They see themselves in the students they’re serving. They see that they can make a difference in the community even as they navigate their own challenges on campus. Sometimes it’s what keeps them going.” Students who continue working with the program have leadership opportunities and can serve as site leads who assist in onboarding new Reading Guides, manage attendance and handle on-site technology troubleshooting.

Encouraging college students to work in P–12 could also serve as a tutor-to-teacher career pipeline. “I think it can expose [college students] to the industry of education. We need the best and brightest,” says Kraft.

Henry sees benefits to teacher candidates who participate in tutoring. Teacher candidates typically serving in teacher support roles earning clinical hours, may work with small groups and teach to a whole class. “But they don’t get that intensive intervention that tutoring provides,” she says. With tutoring, “they’re meeting with that child one on one, and they’re really able to discern which instructional strategies work for what type of kid. When you’re placed shoulder to shoulder with a mentor teacher, yes that’s extremely important, but that really deep knowledge of a student’s learning comes out of one-on-one tutoring situations.”

Recruiting and Wages

Off-campus, tutoring roles for college students can also be a boon for higher education institutions, according to Saga Education CEO Alan Safran. It's good public relations as it serves many institutions' missions to support their local community, he notes.

A tutoring role can be more attractive for college students as a resume builder, Safran says. Safran was an early supporter of using Federal Work-Study to fund an after-school tutoring program at Match Charter High School in Boston, where he served as the school's executive director. Match built a relationship with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard and other HEIs. Safran says that Match negotiated with the MIT's financial aid department to subsidize tutor's wages by 90 percent through Federal Work-Study. Their program grew and college students from Harvard University, Boston College, Tufts University and Boston University participated (The New York Times, 2002).

"At the time, in 2002, \$17 an hour was the wage. It was the highest paid off-campus opportunity," Safran says. He adds that offering higher wages helps attract an institution's most talented students.

Tisdale notes that at Spelman nearly half of the college's students are eligible for Pell grants. "They need to work," she says. "We pay students a stipend because they need to know that when we say literacy education is critical, we believe it enough to invest in a solution. They also need to know that we value their time and contribution to this program as much as other potential employers. Paying a stipend increases student capacity to be consistent." Historic pay rates at the institution are an issue. "The current work study hourly rate is capped at \$10," she says. "They can make that much at McDonald's. The challenge is not just making work study attractive; it's making it feasible. You don't get work-study if you don't need the money. We have students say to us, 'I love SpelREADS, I would love to keep doing it, but I've got to pay this bill.'"

For attracting college students to the role, Hodas agrees high pay is the baseline. "Chipotle is going to pay 17-20 bucks an hour, so we have to pay that much," he says. "And, then, we have to offer a better experience." For persistence, Hodas

says tutors who stay do so for the "sense of doing something important. It's very rewarding to have a successful experience with a third grader or eighth grader where you feel like you're making a difference in their lives. That's where program quality matters – the recruiting, training, and administration function matters."

Creating Peer Communities for Tutors

Another key component of recruiting college students is marketing and communicating the benefits of P–12 tutoring, mentoring and coaching opportunities.

"A lot of coalition members are working on the student communication piece, so students really understand what it means to pursue that pathway through the Federal Work-Study award, the benefits of the path, and getting connected to relevant career opportunities," Cavey says.

"It can be so impactful that the tutors have a peer community to connect with. Not just through training, but opportunities to develop friendships and collegial relationships that keep them inspired and develop a sense of community," Cavey adds.

"College students who want to do tutoring as part of their service work or work-study are super mission driven," Olivieri says. "Most of them have stories about somebody who helped make a difference for them, so they see [tutoring] as a way to give back."

Step Up has also sought ways to add value for college students to make tutoring more attractive. The nonprofit conducted surveys and interviews with about 100 tutors in 2023 and found that "nearly three quarters of college student tutors report they are interested in receiving career development support associated with their tutoring job" (Step Up Tutoring, 2023). Olivieri says that Step Up has organized job skills workshops, resume-building workshops, interview prep, and sessions on how to make the most of your tutoring experience on LinkedIn. "It's an unproven hypothesis, but I really think that there's a chance to promote opportunities in youth development and education fields," she says. "They might not say 'I want to be a teacher,' but after they have experience tutoring we found that more people are open to exploring the idea."

Cohen says GW has data agreements with DC schools and parents to collect student outcome data and other “soft” data like student perception of tutoring. “Ninety-seven percent of middle schoolers say they would recommend tutoring to a friend,” she says. GW’s K–12 tutoring program encourages tutors to wear their branded college apparel to promote college opportunities to middle school students. And, GW has led field trips bringing middle school students to campus to hear from Black and Latinx college students about what it takes to go to college.



The Challenges of Coordinating and Administering College Tutors for P–12

Transportation is a frequently cited obstacle for programs seeking to connect college students to P–12 tutoring positions. According to a 2016-17 survey by U.S. News & World Report, fewer than half of college students brought cars to campus.

“Transportation is the biggest single obstacle and the time it takes to get from place to place,” Cohen says. “DC does have a great transportation system but there are disparities.” Cohen notes that many of the priority schools they target are only served by Metro buses, not the railway, which means a long commute for students.

Allowing tutors entry into the school represents another “cost to the school” in the sense that they are “managed strangers

coming in and out of the building,” Cohen says.

Henry agrees that transportation is a challenge. “We live in a very rural area on Maryland’s Eastern Shore,” she says. While some schools are within walking distance to the campus, other district schools farther afield are a challenge to get students to because of transportation.

Olivieri says that Step Up has found that flexibility is paramount for college students. Offering live-online tutoring as an option allows college students to fit tutoring into their class schedule and removes the need for transportation. “There are so many students who say ‘I really want to do tutoring, but I don’t have a ride.’”

Many districts prefer live-online tutoring, and tutors vastly prefer live-online because in Grand Rapids for in-person tutoring they are driving to schools a half hour away, Hodas says. And he adds, things happen, so “even if you’re like 10 minutes late, that screws everything up. Then the school is going to want to rebook the session. It creates a very bad customer relationship and it makes the program more expensive.”

Safran adds that, similarly, “tutors get really dissatisfied if they show up and the kids are not there. Typically, the K–12 school is not the place where it’s easy to get to unless you take transportation. So, live-online, high-dosage tutoring makes it so much more efficient for the college undergraduate who doesn’t have easy transportation. It optimizes the use of their time and the use of Federal Work-Study dollars.”

Managing Administrative Complexities

At NPSS, Cavey says that, “A lot of our work with the coalition is around capacity building to help connect people. Not just with the community partners and the school districts, but even with other college offices on their own campus that they might not have necessarily collaborated with before.” NPSS offers technical assistance services to states, districts, schools, and nonprofits providing P–12 student support services.

As a Federal Work-Study provider, Step Up Tutoring has a dedicated staff member to build and maintain relationships with higher ed institutions. “We have over 25 active partnerships, so our staff members do the work to promote the opportunity of Step Up Tutoring for college students, get

contracts in place, get job listings approved, and go through the process of being an approved provider,” she says. “For work-study, that’s really just the beginning.” From there, Step Up processes applications, conducts job interviews with students, and assists students through the I-9 verification process for work clearance.

Step Up also has a full-time staff member dedicated to supporting the administrative load of managing work-study students, confirming and signing off on tutors’ hours. Each higher education institution has different approaches in how they operate and administer work-study, Olivieri says. While some institutions may pay students, there have been cases, Olivieri notes, where they have put work-study students on their payroll and sought reimbursement from universities and colleges.

Henry notes that Salisbury University is fortunate in that the May Literacy Center has a full-time faculty director who helps with tutoring as well as a graduate assistant who also provides administrative support for tutoring programs. “Those are the kinds of things that don’t get funded through work-study,” she says.

Growth in the SpelREADS program has spurred Tisdale to explore Work-Study to help expand the ways the program is funded. To start using Work-Study funds, she began a conversation with the financial aid office on her campus. First, the Reading Guide position had to be approved as a work study job. Then, students eligible for work study had to be recruited to apply.

“There have been several challenges with Work-Study. with accessing and effectively using the funds,” she says. “Because SpelREADS has been operating for seven years now, it’s well known and popular among students. We have lots of students apply to be Reading Guides, but not every student is eligible for work-study. One of the program’s strengths is that every Spelman student has a chance to be involved. This literacy initiative is something Spelman is doing to contribute to our community. Similar to our commitment to pay Reading Guides a stipend so students who need to work are able to participate, we don’t want to create a situation where serving with SpelREADS is an opportunity only available to students who are eligible for work-study.”

Students using work-study can work only one work-study position and getting their full number of hours from a tutoring program like SpelREADS can be a challenge. The tutoring session hours are set by the school site and often occur during the same hours that many students have classes. Students also must track their time and submit a timesheet to be paid through Federal Work-Study, which is a new process for many of them. “It’s much more cumbersome than the stipend process, where we track their hours throughout the semester and process one stipend payment at the end,” Tisdale says.

Teach for America’s Hooten says they are exploring partnerships with universities one by one to become an approved FWS tutoring vendor. “We are learning that FWS programs vary significantly at the higher education institution level. For example, universities set pay rates and application timelines individually, and manage hiring and administration differently.” Even within a single state such as Arizona where Hooten is based, approaches to FWS differ at each HEI, she says. “Ideally, to grow tutoring programs through increased commitment for community service roles using FWS, there would be standardization that makes it much more accessible for programs to partner at scale,” she says. “For instance, if the University of California system were to have a centralized approach to FWS partnership across all campuses, it could enable FWS to rapidly grow roles dedicated to tutoring and other community service initiatives.”

“FWS programs vary significantly at the higher education institution level.”

- Katie Tennesen Hooten of Teach for America

If colleges and universities are looking to double their percentage of community service roles, Hooten wonders why not have a more standardized way to vet and approve tutoring partners and why not have universities commit to a standard base pay for community service roles.

Finding the Time: Overcoming Scheduling Issues

Brown University’s Matthew A. Kraft, notes that there are some real logistical challenges with staffing K–12 tutoring with college students. “For example, what if someone is only

doing work-study for one semester or what if their semester doesn't align well with the K–12 academic semester. Still, the upside of pre-existing programs that offer federal funding is pretty attractive.” He adds that the misalignment in K–12 and higher education academic semesters also could mean K–12 students get less tutoring than they need.

“Our program manager will tell you that scheduling is probably among the most complicated things that we have to do,” GW’s Amy Cohen says. “Our tutors have a tough schedule but the students who are being tutored also have a tough schedule. Some of our schools have an advisory period available for us to tutor but some don’t.” Cohen notes that this requires flexibility in offering opportunities to tutor in-school and after-school, though she notes that they encounter difficulties with middle schoolers after-school tutoring attendance.

Ryen Borden, Senior Program Officer, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, focuses on teacher workforce issues and helping schools ensure that classrooms are staffed with teachers who are fully prepared for their jobs and racially diverse, reflecting the K–12 student demographics.

“One of the biggest challenges prospective teachers face is being able to afford a high-quality pathway to teaching,” Borden says. “Some people can’t afford to quit their job and student-teach five days a week.” Borden says paid teacher residencies could be a viable way to address teacher shortages, but historically these programs have relied on philanthropic or government grants. She cites the Texas Education Agency as one organization taking an innovative approach to implement sustainable, affordable residencies, that allow districts to hire candidates into paid tutoring or substitute teaching roles as part of the program – all using a budget-neutral approach.

“While the state catalyzes these strategic staffing models with grant funds, they concurrently support districts to design and implement financially sustainable models” to continue supporting the residencies, she says. “The districts win because they gain access to a pool of aspiring teachers to fill their tutoring positions. K–12 students benefit from a tutor who has some pedagogical training, and candidates benefit because they are compensated while making progress toward their licensure requirements.”

Optimizing Federal Work-Study for High Community Impact

“There’s so much potential in Federal Work-Study, to optimize the use of those funds in ways that have high community impact,” says NPSS’s Cavey. “The reason I say potential is we know that Federal Work-Study is often under-utilized for P–12. There are a lot of people that have experience [in work-study] working in the cafeteria or at the gym and maybe those things work for them, but that’s not the only way to benefit from work-study.”

“There’s so much potential in Federal Work-Study, to optimize the use of those funds in ways that have high community impact.”

- Mariko Yoshisato Cavey of NPSS

Borden points out that colleges of education across the country are experiencing enrollment declines. Deans, she says, are under pressure to boost enrollment numbers. One way they may boost enrollment is by helping candidates overcome the affordability barrier.

“If we can find ways to make it affordable for candidates to enroll in teacher preparation programs,” she says, “then perhaps we can generate enough student FTEs to justify the cost” of hiring a program coordinator who knows the intricacies of funds available for education training including how candidates might leverage Federal Work-Study to advance on the path to a career in teaching.

Federal Work-Study represents just one funding stream for filling NPSS-supported roles such as tutoring, mentoring and student success coaches for P–12 schools. Borden suggests that being able to navigate and access multiple funding streams would be advantageous for funding teacher training.

“There’s work-study dollars, TEACH grants, AmeriCorps funding, and Department of Labor funding. It takes someone with time and expertise to access and braid multiple funding streams together in ways that create a financial package that is affordable for the candidate,” she says.

The administrative complexities of managing P–12/HEI partnerships is a serious challenge for sustaining these programs.

“There are funds available that could be used to compensate a prospective teacher and make it affordable for people to become teachers, but the administrative burden is sometimes more work than universities are staffed to effectively manage,” she says.

Still, Borden believes it’s possible to manage all this complexity on the administrative side. That might mean for some programs making difficult, unpopular decisions. For example, often teacher preparation programs allow candidates to find their own placements.

“That leads to a situation where candidates are in multiple districts,” she explains. When universities decide to restrict these placements to a few targeted districts, she explains, that enables those partnerships to have a dedicated liaison with the district and develop a “deep, mutually beneficial partnership.”

A shared investment in the program is essential for success, Borden says. “It is a shift in the way many programs and districts have operated historically, which has been more transactional and dependent on individual relationships,” she says. “When an individual leaves, the partnership falls apart. That’s not a real partnership in that case.”

Hooten believes that tutoring pathways should be broader than education majors. “We are seeing Ignite fellows develop an interest in teaching as a result of their meaningful experiences with students as a tutor. Through direct and immediate impact with students, Ignite fellows across academic backgrounds, such as STEM, have the chance to realize, “Oh, I’d be great at teaching kids math!”

Borden suggests that more guidance and clarity could be useful to districts and universities to understand the responsibilities of both districts and universities when employing university students working in P–12 schools. “There are different funding reimbursement levels depending on if they’re working in a reading classroom and a Title I school,” she notes. Borden says when there is turnover at districts and universities, institutional knowledge about these distinctions can be lost. “Having guidance or spaces where people can learn about these models could be helpful,” she says.

Source: National Partnership for Student Success.

Key Steps for Creating a State Partnership for Student Success

Step
01

Issue a State-level Call to Action

Step
02

Convene Key Stakeholders and Set Goals

Step
03

Remove Barriers to Implementation

Step
04

Engage AmeriCorps, Higher Education, and Community-based Providers in Increasing the Number of People Prepared to Work in High-Impact Student Support Roles

Step
05

Identify Pilot Districts and Connect Them with Providers of People-Powered Student Supports

Source: National Partnership for Student Success.

Recommendations

Based on our interviews and research, we offer several recommendations below for streamlining aspects of Federal Work-Study programs for supporting high-dosage tutoring for P–12 schools.

Offer competitive wages to attract the best and brightest

college students using Federal Work-Study funds: By offering higher than typical wages for Federal Work-Study community service roles, higher education institutions are more likely to attract more and better candidates to these roles. “It’s sort of like Maslow’s hierarchy of needs,” says Hodas. “The first thing is, [college students] want to make money.”

Develop tools that assist institutions with scheduling and

coordinating tutoring sessions: As noted by several institutions featured in this paper, college students’ class schedules and P–12 public school schedules can be challenging to align and coordinate. Scheduling technologies could be adopted or created to help ease this administrative burden.

When in-person tutoring isn’t feasible, encourage high-dosage,

live-online tutoring as an option: For college students tutoring in P–12 public schools who face transportation challenges, institutions like Grand Valley State University and Step Up Tutoring have leaned into high-dosage live-online tutoring with success. A recent article on live-online tutoring from Saga CEO Alan Safran and Chiefs for Change CEO Bob Runcie highlights several studies showing that when consistent, high-quality tutoring is delivered online it can help P–12 students improve their academic performance. Live-online tutoring can remove obstacles such as space limitations or managing additional school visitors on site for P–12 schools.

Seek opportunities to standardize wage offerings, reimbursement processes, and increase incentives for Federal

Work-Study community service roles across higher education institutions: Nonprofits organizations attempting to work with multiple higher education institutions and across states face a dizzying array of institutional differences when it comes to FWS programs, which requires administrative and programmatic expertise. “Institutions have the ability to change their policies around” FWS, notes Step Up Tutoring’s CEO Olivieri.

“There are organizations that want to make these opportunities available to college students, and institutions can do small things in terms of their policy setting that could incentivize financial aid offices or student employment services to support more community service opportunities.”

Resources

The following resources are available to help increase high-impact tutoring in P–12.

National Partnership for Student Success (NPSS)

The National Partnership for Student Success offers a wide range of resources that school districts, higher education institutions, and youth supporting organizations can use to craft strategies for supporting students through tutoring, mentoring, and other NPSS-supported services. They offer technical assistance and resources such as playbooks, quality standards, and toolkits. Institutions can request technical assistance from NPSS by visiting <https://www.partnershipstudentsuccess.org/technical-assistance/>.

National Student Support Accelerator (NSSA)

The National Student Support Accelerator is a program of the Stanford Accelerator for Learning and EdSolutions at Stanford University. NSSA offers school districts and organizations a diverse set of tools and resources for implementing high-impact tutoring in K–12 schools. They offer a free toolkit designed in partnership with Blue Engine that offers program design and implementation guidance. NSSA maintains a tutoring provider data at <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/database/tutoring>. The NSSA also offers a tutoring cost calculator to estimate the costs of implementing tutoring programs at <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tutoring/calculator>.

Saga Education’s Saga Coach

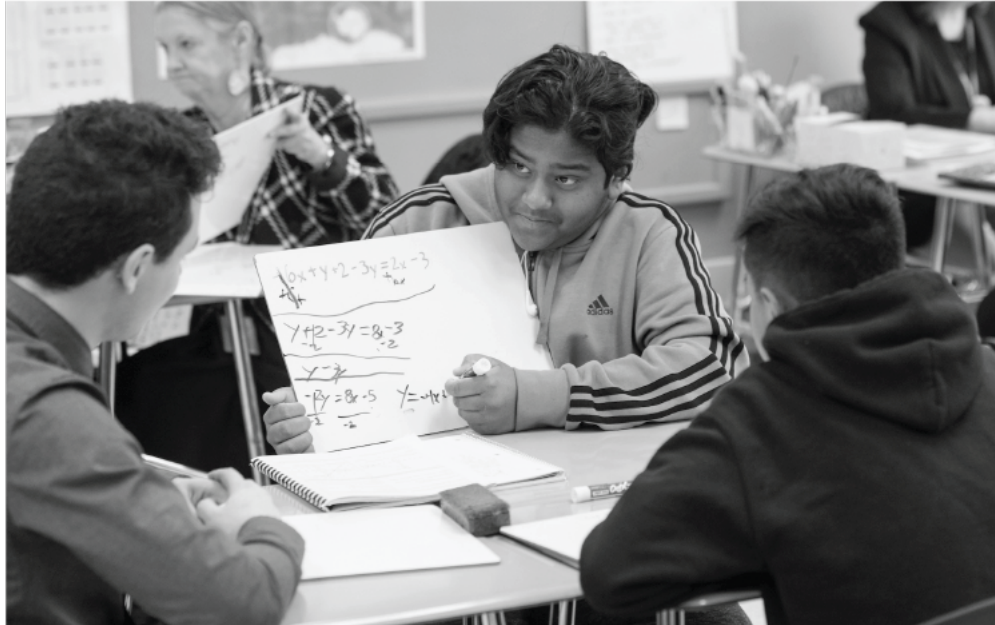
Saga Coach is a free online, evidence-based tutor training program that provides the foundational skills for being an effective tutor. The training is independent of grade and subject. Saga Coach can be used as an organization’s main tutor training program, a supplement to existing training, or as a way to provide ongoing professional development. Learn more at <https://saga.org/products/saga-coach/>.

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