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## The Center for Educational Partnerships

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The Center for Educational Partnerships establishes collaborative educational enterprises with schools and school divisions that support dissemination of proven practices, rigorous field trials of promising models, and development and testing of innovative research-based models in collaboration with Old Dominion University's primary educational partners.

The Center for Educational Partnerships focuses its efforts on the following activities:

- Developing broad-based partnerships with school divisions in the Hampton Roads area and greater Virginia.
- Serving as a conduit through which Old Dominion University will endeavor to make available the best local, state, national, and international resources to the primary partners to fulfill our mutual obligation to assure academic achievement, development of responsible citizenship, and self-fulfillment of the youth served by our partner schools.
- Pursuing selected inter-institutional and international educational partnerships that capitalize on identified areas of strength at ODU or enhance strategic relationships between these partners and the Hampton Roads community.

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# Research Brief

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## Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Provision of No Child Left Behind

### **Abstract**

instituted the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) program, in which schools in their third year of failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are required to offer out-of-school-time tutoring in core subjects to low-income students. This study synthesized provider effects reported in the extant body of SES provider evaluations to generate an estimate of the overall effectiveness of the SES policy in terms of improving student achievement and to identify provider characteristics that are associated with variation in student achievement effects.

### **Background**

The  
which provides federal funds to schools with large  
populations of low-income students, instituted the  
Supplemental Educational Services (SES) program. The SES  
program requires

Much of the responsibility for SES programs lies with individual states. These responsibilities

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effect size was statistically significant. The mean weighted reading effect size was +.017. The number of students included in these studies was 139, 844. The test for statistical significance at the 95% confidence interval indicated that the overall mean reading effect, though also very small, was statistically significant.

Generally, effect sizes of .20 are considered small, effect sizes of .50 are considered moderate, and effect sizes of .80 are considered large (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). However, in the context of previous educational research, much smaller effect size estimates might be expected (Hill, Bloom, Black, & Lipsey, 2008). Even in this light, the effect size estimates revealed in this analysis are very small, particularly the reading outcome.

To appropriately interpret the effect sizes reported in this study, they should be placed in the context of the effectiveness of other Title I reform efforts and syntheses of tutoring effects. Meta-analyses of tutoring programs over the last quarter century have revealed much larger effects of tutoring on student achievement. For example, a meta-analysis of tutoring programs conducted by Cohen et al. (1982) revealed effect sizes of .29 for reading and .60 for math. A meta-analysis of volunteer tutoring programs conducted by Ritter et al. (2009) found a similar overall effect size for reading, .26, and a .27 overall effect size for math tutoring. An examination of out-of-school-time instructional efforts conducted by Lauer et al. (2006) found a .07 overall effect size for reading and a .16 overall effect size for math tutoring.

a moderate to large program effect. The authors of that study concluded that CSR was positively impacting achievement on a school-wide basis and that effects were larger the longer the programs were in place (Borman et al., 2003). Similarly, a meta-analysis of all Title I programs +.11, which also can be interpreted as a moderate effect (Hill et al., 2008) and is much higher than the effect sizes of the SES program found here. Figure 2 compares the effect sizes of SES to other Title 1 reforms.

*Figure 2. A comparison of effect sizes of Title I school effectiveness meta-analyses.*

### ***Analysis of Provider Characteristics***

Further analysis revealed that the effect sizes found here were not consistent across studies for either the math or reading subject areas. This lack of consistency indicates that variance in the effects across studies may be attributable to other v

*Figure 3. A comparison of math effect sizes by provider characteristics.*

For the reading analyses, the results revealed that providers exhibiting the following characteristics had larger mean effect sizes:

- Employed
-





School district providers may show greater effect sizes due to characteristics inherent in district composition and service delivery. These characteristics include using tutors who hold at least a four-year degree, using a prescribed curriculum, offering tutoring in both subject areas, and offering services to ELL and SPED students. All of the district providers included in the analysis possessed each of these characteristics. A review of the literature on tutoring also indicates several of these same traits as essential for a successful tutoring program (Cohen et al., 1982; Fashola, 1998; Topping, 2000; Wasik, 1998).

## **Conclusions & Recommendations**

The legislative intent of the SES program is to narrow or close the achievement gap by improving the academic achievement of historically underperforming populations. Our findings indicate that the overall effect of SES on student achievement is quite small when compared to previous Title 1 reforms and previous studies of tutoring effects.

The results of this study provide some guidance for design and approval of SES tutoring services, which, consequently, are consistent with decades of prior research on tutoring. Characteristics of effective SES tutoring programs identified in this study include (a) the use of school district providers; (b) experienced, well-trained tutors with four-year degrees; (c) a national or prescribed curriculum; and, (d) one-to-one tutoring for reading instruction. Effect size estimates for both the math and reading analyses were higher for providers that had these traits.

Although the evidence presented here provides some guidance for structuring and approving SES provider programs, the small overall effects associated with SES suggest that, as a policy, SES is not having the desired effect. In cases where school districts were granted an exception and were allowed to offer their own SES programs, the school districts were three times more effective in increasing math achievement relative to other providers. School district programs also were offered at a fraction of the cost-- the costs of providing SES are all marginal for school districts, whereas private and non-profit providers incur additional fixed costs.

As Congress considers re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we suggest a careful review of the Supplemental Educational Services provision in light of these findings. Despite mounting evidence that SES is far less effective than previous Title I policies, we are not aware of a single instance in which a provider has been removed from an approved state list on the basis of failing to demonstrate positive effects on student achievement.

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