

# Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Small-Group Tutorial

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## Abstract

This study addressed the implementation of the tutorial program currently in use at an urban school district in Mississippi. With focus on the implementation of the tutorial program, the perceived impact of the program on the academic achievement of at-risk students and what changes would benefit the program.

## Problem

**The school developed a small group tutorial program to address the needs of the at-risk students and to meet the requirements of NCLB.**

- The major issue the subject area teachers noted was the number for students who were not successful when taking the district-mandated exams.
- Questions have arisen from the teachers who serve as tutors on the effectiveness of the tutorial program and what steps can be taken to ensure uniform implementation of the program.
- The components of the programs were created collectively within the individual departments with no consistent format developed between all subjects.
- Because of this inconsistency, there was not a standard available for the teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

## Purpose

The purpose of this project was examine the teachers perceptions of the in-house tutorial program currently in use. It focuses on the teachers' perceptions of the methods used to assess a student's current knowledge and implementation of a tutorial program to provide the assistance. The information collected will be used for an extended period to provide academic assistance to future groups of students.

## Relevant Literature

### Conceptual Framework

Bloom (1974) created an instructional plan using the feedback/correction process, calling it **Mastery Learning**. Using this process, teachers organized material into learning units. Following initial instruction, teachers then used a formative assessment to ascertain the student's level of understanding

### Research Studies

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through NCLB legislation (2002) provided low achieving students the opportunity to receive assistance through additional academic instruction. Instruction is provided through participation in tutorial programs.

- Many districts have decided to use the Title I funds to develop their own in-house tutorial programs.
- Evaluations of tutorial programs have shown that the programs can be successful in raising student achievement.
- According to Ling and Moore (2008), several outcomes were cited including improved academic achievement, increased high school graduation rates and more students developing an increased sense of self.

## Research Questions

**RQ1:** What are the teachers' perceptions of the in-house tutorial program currently in use?

**SQ1:** How do participants perceive the implementation of the tutorial program?

**SQ2:** What is the perceived impact of the small group tutorial program on the academic achievement of at-risk students?

**SQ3:** What, if any, changes need to be made in order to improve the programs?

## Procedures

### Design

- Qualitative case study

### Sample

- 35 teachers who served as tutors in the program
- Emails were sent out to all tutors. The first ten respondents were chosen.
- Urban high school in Mississippi

### Data Sources

- Taped Interviews
- Member checks of interview transcripts

### Procedures

The data collected were processed and analyzed using technique referred to as narrative inquiry. The collected data was categorized for emergent themes. Narratives were created from the data collected during the interviews.

## Data Analysis

Reviewed audio recordings and transcribed interviews. Themes were highlighted and verified through the use of member checks.

## Findings

- Lack of administrative involvement in the implementation and management of the tutorial program.
- Lack of interaction between tutors due to no common planning time and lack of structure within the program.
- Lack of parental involvement due to no clear communications methods in place to reach parents.

## Limitations

**Several limitations were disclosed in the completed study.**

- This study may be limited because was located in one school setting and involved a limited number of interview participants.
- There are no data available to demonstrate if this tutoring program was more effective than other tutorial programs.
- The nature of the study, time, and limited resources did not permit measuring the impact of the tutorial program.
- The study did not examine particular components of the curriculum involved nor did it fully explore the individual practices of the teachers during the tutorial sessions.

## Conclusions

### Recommendations

- More administrative involvement through collaboration with the tutors on a regular basis
- Effective parental notifications through clear communication and using the school to help spread the word about the tutorial program
- Communication between tutors through the use of common planning time and the creation of a structured tutorial program.

## Social Change Implications

- With a unified implementation, this tutorial program can be utilized for consecutive years with different groups of students at this particular school site.
- Tutors also will have the ability to make customizations to meet the needs of a particular student during a tutorial session.
- Having a unified implementation allows educators in different locations to utilize this program and make adaptations to fit their particular needs.

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