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Supplemental Educational Services as a Component of No Child Left Behind:

A Mixed-Method Analysis of its Impact on Student Achievement

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Supplemental Educational Services as a Component of No Child Left Behind:
A Mixed-Method Analysis of its Impact on Student Achievement

The present mixed-method study evaluated the effects of Supplemental Educational Services, a federally mandated component of No Child Left Behind, on student achievement in Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools. SES provides free tutoring outside of school to disadvantaged students who attend Title I schools in their third year of failing to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress on state assessments (NCLB, 2001). A matched treatment-control group design was employed, in which students who received SES tutoring in either reading or mathematics were demographically matched to similar schoolmates who were eligible for SES but did not participate. Student achievement and consumer satisfaction results are discussed in the sections below relative to program, education policy, and research design issues for evaluating the efficacy of SES as a systemic intervention.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) Act is sweeping federal legislation designed to help all children become proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014. Given negotiations between state and federal agencies, however, the exact implementation of NCLB involving both the provision of educational services and accountability requirements varies on a state-by-state basis (Christie, 2004). Consistent with NCLB's emphasis on scientifically based research, the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA, 2002) states that it is critically important to identify "what works" in bringing all students to proficiency levels in core subjects. NCLB requires that public schools use data to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices (Yeagley, 2003), and that educational programs associated with NCLB must meet scientifically

based research standards to ensure that students are exposed to methods for which a strong research base exists.

A core aspect of NCLB is the offering of Supplemental Educational Services (SES). Through SES, free tutoring outside of school is provided to students who (a) attend Title I schools in the second year or more of school improvement (i.e., third year or more of failing to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP) and (b) participate in the free/reduced-price meal program (Ross, Potter, & Harmon, 2006). The SES program offers tutoring before or after school hours, on weekends, and during the summer, by state-approved providers, including community-based, faith-based, and private organizations. The school districts involved are required to reserve 20% of their Title I funds to support these services and School Choice options.

Preliminary findings of SES implementation and achievement outcomes have been provided from studies conducted in Louisiana (Potter, Ross, Paek, Pribesh, & Nunnery, 2006), Louisville (Muñoz, Potter, & Ross, 2008), Los Angeles Unified School District (Rickles & White, 2006; Rickles & Barnhart, 2007), Pittsburgh (Zimmer, Christina, Hamilton, & Prine, 2006), Tennessee (Ross, Potter, Paek, McKay, Sanders, & Ashton, 2008), and most recently, nationally across seven urban districts (Zimmer, Gill, Razquin, Booker, & Lockwood, 2007). Small effect sizes, more often positive than negative, have been obtained in most SES studies. Due to the inability to randomly assign students to SES participation and non-participation groups, how much of the obtained effects are attributable to differential characteristics (e.g., motivation) of the SES participants and non-participants remains unclear. Such potential biases can be particularly problematic for research on choice programs such as SES where less than 20% of those eligible for the services are likely to participate (Zimmer et al., 2007).

When research results are released, the modest effect sizes are interpreted as proof of failure by some stakeholders and success by others, depending on the political or business agenda being applied. Clearly, given the continuation of SES in the reauthorization of NCLB, it is important to gain understanding of how its impacts can be researched and disseminated to advance educational policy and practices. Aside from issues involving the analysis of achievement effects, there is a need to acquire scientific knowledge about the implementation of SES to (a) explain its educational outcomes, (b) identify “best practices,” and (c) inform future programs and policies. Accordingly, advantages are suggested for mixed-methods research designs (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Chatterji, 2005) that, to the extent possible, look inside the “black box” of SES tutoring. Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and surveys, therefore, can provide important insights to complement findings from quantitative analyses.

Research on Tutoring

A review of studies reinforces the conceptualization that tutoring programs are effective to improve student success in schools. Relatively recent tutoring studies tied program success to systematic tutor training and continued program monitoring. Morris, Tyner, and Perney (2000) describe an early intervention reading program in terms of its careful tutor training and the formative evaluation of the tutoring sessions throughout program implementation. From this study, tutoring effectiveness is characterized by thorough and frequent diagnostic and prescriptive interchanges between tutor and tutee.

Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody (2000), conducted a meta-analysis of reading program using studies published between 1976 and 1998. Each of the studies synthesized utilized adult tutoring interventions in an effort to improve the achievement of at-risk students. The Elbaum et al. (2000) review of the tutoring literature showed that success can be achieved

through effective tutoring; the authors found meta-analytic effect sizes of 0.5 standard deviations. According to Elbaum et al. (2000), schools can address the problem of bringing low-achieving students up to high academic standards using approaches that involve tutoring.

According to research conducted by Barley, Lauer, Arens, Apthorp, Englert, Snow, & Akiba (2002), tutoring can improve the achievement of low-achieving or at-risk students. The authors reviewed tutoring research that focuses on improved achievement for low-achieving students, describing program characteristics as well as evidence of success. The conclusions of Barley et al. (2002) are relevant for a better understanding of effective tutoring characteristics: (a) tutors with virtually every level of education have been used, provided the intervention was preceded by appropriate tutor training, (b) tutoring sessions are characteristically monitored and adapted with appropriate frequency by program implementers, (c) a strong guiding purpose (one that directs tutors in their decision making) seems to be integral in an effective tutoring program, (d) the diagnostic and prescriptive interaction is encouraged in effective tutoring practice, and (e) finding and retaining quality tutors should be a primary concern. One limitation of the Barley et al. (2002) study is that the studies reviewed are largely studies of early literacy.

Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, & Martin-Glenn (2004) extended the review of research conducted by Barley et al. (2002) by including an analysis of studies of mathematics. Lauer et al. (2004) conducted an extensive literature review to identify both published and unpublished research and evaluation studies conducted after 1984 that addressed the effectiveness of a program, practice, or strategy delivered outside the regular school day for low-achieving or at-risk K–12 students. The Lauer et al. (2004) synthesis resulted in statistically significant positive effects on both reading and mathematics student achievement. The overall effect sizes ranged from .06 to .13 for reading and from .09 to .17 for mathematics. Together, the

results for reading and mathematics suggest that tutoring programs can significantly increase the achievement of these students by an average of one-tenth of a standard deviation compared to those students who do not participate in out-of-school tutoring programs.

With regard to moderators of tutoring effectiveness, grade level was a statistically significant moderator of effect sizes for both reading and mathematics outcomes. For reading, the largest positive effect size (.26) occurred for students in the lower elementary grades (K–2), while for mathematics the largest positive effect size (.44) was for students in high school (9–12). For both reading and mathematics, effect sizes were larger for tutoring programs that were more than 45 hours in duration, but the programs with the longest durations had effect sizes that were not significantly different from zero. Only the reading studies had sufficient information to analyze the statistical influence of the way in which students were grouped in the tutoring programs; in that regard, the largest positive effect size (.50) occurred for the reading studies that used one-on-one tutoring. Thus, this research synthesis suggests that certain program features can result in higher positive effects of tutoring programs on student achievement.

In summary, previous research indicates that individual tutoring, with certain characteristics, can be an effective way of adapting instruction to individual differences in educational settings (Barley et. al., 2002; Lauer et al., 2004). In schools, individual teachers routinely face the difficult challenge of trying to accommodate numerous students in a single class and, more importantly, functioning at many different skill levels. Tutoring greatly extends the potential for instructional adaptation by reducing the student-teacher ratio to as low as one-to-one. As shown by this review of literature, well-implemented tutoring can have positive effects on student achievement.

Research Purpose

In concert with its emphasis on accountability for schools, NCLB (2001) explicitly requires all states to evaluate the effectiveness of each SES provider in raising student achievement. The present study of SES outcomes in Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools (JCPS) was part of the larger evaluation of SES state wide. Because JCPS has by far the largest number of SES students of any KY district and unique characteristics as a large urban district; it seemed logical and beneficial to analyze its data as a separate study. Based on the same rationale, an initial study was conducted in JCPS in 2005-06, in which SES students were compared to matched control students on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) in Reading and Mathematics (Muñoz et al., 2008). No significant effects were associated with individual SES providers or providers overall. However, by limiting the provider sample to only those serving at least 100 students with complete data, only a small number of providers were included in that analysis.

The primary purpose of the present study was to extend the prior research to encompass a second school year and a more comprehensive examination of individual provider impacts. The major research question addressed concerned the degree to which the provision of SES in JCPS would raise achievement for the students served. We addressed this question via a quantitative analysis of student-level scores on state-mandated tests in reading and mathematics. A randomized field trial (RFT), potentially the most rigorous research design, could not be implemented due to the SES program's emphasis on parents' ability to choose whether to enroll their children in SES and which providers to choose, should they enroll. Accordingly, as in 2005-06, the next most rigorous option, was adopted--(Ross et al., 2006)--a quasi-experimental design (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) using closely matched program and control students with multiple student-level covariates.

Research Context

The context for the current study was all SES participants in JCPS. The district is the 26th largest school district in the nation. It is located in a large metropolitan area and has 150 schools serving approximately more than 96,000 students; 33 of these schools were required to offer SES during the 2006-2007 school year. SES is an expensive component of the Title I budget, with estimates of costs of approximately \$4.5 million for a school year. JCPS educates a high percentage of at-risk urban students with high poverty levels (i.e., over 53% subsidized meals, 54% single-parent homes). It has a student assignment plan based on managed choice, which facilitates the racial desegregation of its schools by providing students with transportation from their home neighborhoods to other parts of the district.

As indicated above, the present study is a continuation of a study of the 2005-06 implementation of SES in JCPS. Specifically, Muñoz et al. (2008) analyzed student-level achievement scores for the SES and matched control students on the KY state assessment system in Reading and Mathematics [i.e., Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT)] and school district measures [i.e., demographics, Predictive Assessment Series (PAS) Test]. Findings showed no significant advantages for SES in Reading and Mathematics for any individual provider or for all providers combined. Importantly with regard to interpreting results from the present study, the Muñoz et al. findings indicated that implementation of SES at the JCPS school district was characterized by (a) limited duration of the tutoring activity relative to regular school programs; (b) the lack of sensitivity of high-stakes, standardized tests for assessing gains on specific knowledge skills that may be taught (Linn & Miller, 2005); (c) failure to implement the interventions fully; and (d) lack of effective communication by providers with teachers and parents.

A second research question guiding this study was: What are the perceptions of SES providers from district coordinators, principals/site coordinators, teachers, and parents? We addressed this question via an online survey system for the district coordinator, principals/site coordinators, and teachers at SES schools and paper-based surveys for parents of SES students served. Although the focus of this study was on student academic outcomes in reading and mathematics, capturing perceptions of multiple stakeholders is a key element to data triangulation (Mathison, 1988) and avoiding “black box” evaluations (Muñoz, 2005).

Method

A quasi-experimental design was used for analyzing student achievement. Specifically, students receiving SES were matched to demographically similar comparison students from the same schools (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Ross et al., 2004; Shadish et al., 2002). Given the relatively small sample sizes for provider X grade-level groups, it was decided to replicate the Year 1 (2005-06) procedure of aggregating data across all 25 service providers in an initial analysis. In an extension of the Year 1 design, subsequent analyses examined individual provider effects where sample size was 15 or more students.

Participants and Matching Procedure

District data identified the SES providers from which each eligible student received services during the 2006-2007 school year. Providers serving students in JCPS ranged from large national companies to local community-based organizations. A typical tutoring session lasted one hour after school, two days per week. Provider programs featured a variety of methods of instruction. Some employed one-on-one or small-group instruction, while others tutored in the student’s home or online. Most programs lasted for several weeks, with the majority of tutoring taking place in the second (spring) semester of the school year.

The SES provider data were combined with databases containing student demographics, formative assessment results, and state assessment results for students in Grades 2-11. Of the 16,684 students who were eligible to receive SES services, 3,381 (20.3%) had valid state assessment data in Reading and/or Mathematics; however, only 2,637 (15.8% of total eligible) had both state assessment and previous test scores. Of these, 1,772 students (11%) actually received services, whereas 865 had applied for but did not participate in SES. The shrinkage in sample size is due largely to the characteristics of the state assessment in Kentucky. Only students in grades 3-8 and 10 take the annual state assessment in Reading, whereas only those in grades 3-8 and 11 are tested in Mathematics. Since no previous achievement baseline assessment scores were available for third graders in both subjects and eleventh graders in Mathematics, these students were not included in the analyses.

Reading participants. The sample included SES participants and a demographically matched sample of SES-eligible, non-participating “control” students. The participating service providers began implementing SES services in the 2006-2007 school year. Table 1 illustrates the key characteristics by which the treatment and control students were matched at the beginning of the school year for the analysis of Reading outcomes. As shown, the matches were based on four variables, including previous diagnostic test scores in Reading, gender, race, and participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program. All students included were active participants in the free or reduced-price lunch program and comparable on grade level. The comparability of the remaining matches was evaluated using chi-square tests for categorical variables [gender, $\chi(1, N = 2540) = .48, p = .49$; race, $\chi(1, N = 2540) = 9.75, p = .01$] and ANOVAs for continuous variables [previous test scores, $F(1, 2538) = 9.94, p < .01$]. As indicated in Table 1, the comparison sample tended to include more minority students and scored

slightly over 2 points lower ($d = -.13$) than did the SES sample. As a result, we included these variables as covariates in the posttest analysis.

Insert Table 1 here

Mathematics participants. Table 2 presents the key characteristics by which the treatment and control students were matched at the beginning of the school year (2006-07) for the analysis of Mathematics outcomes. All students included were active participants in the free or reduced-price lunch program and comparable in grade levels. As in the case of the Reading sample, the initial comparability of the remaining matches on the three key variables was evaluated using chi-square tests for categorical variables [gender, $\chi(1, N = 648) = .97, p = .33$; race, $\chi(1, N = 648) = 8.31, p = .01$] and ANOVAs for continuous variables [previous test scores, $F(1, 646) = 1.97, p = .16$]. As found for the Reading sample matching analyses, the comparison sample for Mathematics tended to include more minority students than did the SES sample. Thus, we again included this variable and previous test scores as covariates in the posttest analysis.

Insert Table 2 here

Achievement Measures

The achievement measure employed was the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) in Reading and Mathematics, with each subtest consisting of 24 multiple choice and 6 constructed response items. The “diagnostic” test, used for matching SES and control students on prior achievement and as the pretest covariate, was the Predictive Assessment Series (PAS), which consisted of 24 multiple-choice items. The PAS ThinkLink benchmark test (ThinkLink, 2008) is considered a reliable predictor of student performance on criterion referenced tests. ThinkLink PAS results can be used to gauge progress toward proficiency levels as defined by each state under the requirements of NCLB. KCCT Reading and Mathematics contribute 14.5% of the 100% accountability formula used as part of the annual state assessment (Kentucky Department of Education, 2005). All criterion (KCCT in Reading and Mathematics) tests were group-administered and scored following standardized procedures.

Only the students who had complete data encompassing the PAS and KCCT Reading and Mathematics served as the basis for the student- level matching component (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). The PAS was administered at the beginning of the school year to students in grades 3-10 in Reading and to students in grades 3-5 in Mathematics. At the end of the 2006-2007 school year, students in grades 3-8 and 10 took the KCCT Reading subtest, and those in grades 3-8 and 11 took the KCCT Mathematics subtest. Six through eight and eleventh graders were not included in the present study due to the lack of a baseline test in Mathematics. A summary of the tests and analyses employed is provided in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 here

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

The questionnaires used in this study were adapted from those originally developed by Ross et al., 2006 and field-tested and validated in the SES evaluations conducted in Tennessee (Potter, Ross, & McDonald, 2005c), and Louisiana (Potter, Ross, Paek, Pribesh, & Nunnery, 2006).

The State of Kentucky, Supplemental Educational Services District Coordinator Questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to assess the perceptions of SES provider services by the district SES coordinators or Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). It contains 14 Likert-type items evaluating providers in areas such as communication, adherence to federal and local laws, ability to serve both special education and English Language Learner students, and overall satisfaction. An open-ended comment section is also included.

The State of Kentucky, Supplemental Educational Services Teacher Questionnaire. To minimize the amount of time for teacher responses, an abbreviated instrument, consisting of three questions, was used. The first question listed all the providers (n = 38) serving the district and asked whether or not the respondent heard of each. The second question listed the same providers and asked whether or not each contacted the respondent during the year. The third question was open-ended, soliciting comments about each provider. For purposes of this study, the open-ended comments were analyzed with regard to theme and attitude (positive, negative, or neutral).

The State of Kentucky, Supplemental Educational Services Principal/Site Coordinator Questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to assess the perceptions of SES by the *school leader* most familiar with the SES services provided at the school (Potter et al., 2005b). It was identical in content to the Teacher Questionnaire described above.

The State of Kentucky Supplemental Educational Services Parent Questionnaire. This instrument was the only paper-based survey in the evaluation. It contains 8 Likert-type items on topics such as provider communication, progress reports sent home on student goals achieved, and overall provider satisfaction (Potter et al., 2005a). It also contains an open-ended section in which respondents can comment about their reactions to the tutoring services.

Results

Student Achievement

Table 4 displays a summary of the KCCT Reading and Mathematics student achievement analyses. The direction of the means in Mathematics slightly favored the SES treatment group over the control group.

KCCT Reading Test Scores. Tests of the homogeneity of regression indicated that assumptions of homogeneity were met and that usage of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was justified. The ANCOVA performed on KCCT Reading posttest scores yielded significance for the PAS [$F(1, 2536) = 16.35, p < .01$] and race [$F(1, 2536) = 6.20, p < .05$] covariates. More importantly, the Program effect [$F(1, 2536) = 1.69, p = .19$] was nonsignificant, indicating no differences between the SES and the comparison students.

As a follow-up, a sub-group analysis by number of service hours was conducted, using previous test scores and race as covariates. The service hour variable was derived using a median split for the entire sample, whereby the duration of participation by *regular attenders* was greater than 18.25 hrs. per year and by *low attenders* was less than 18.25 hrs. The ANCOVA performed on KCCT Reading by group (i.e., regular attendee, low attendee, comparison group) again yielded significance for the PAS [$F(1, 2535) = 16.32, p < .001$] and race [$F(1, 2535) = 5.86, p < .05$] covariates. More importantly, an overall significant effect was found for treatment

groups [$F(2, 2535) = 4.45, p = .01$]. However, post-hoc analyses indicated that a statistically significant difference occurred between regular ($M_{\text{adj}} = 679.05, SD = 158.03$) and low ($M_{\text{adj}} = 703.33, SD = 169.40$) attendees, but favoring low attendees (Mean Difference = 24.28, $p < .05$). Comparison students did not differ from either group. The effect sizes for regular and low attenders relative to the comparison group were -.09 and +.06, respectively.

KCCT Mathematics Test Scores. Tests of homogeneity of regression confirmed that assumptions to justify ANCOVA were met for Mathematics. Accordingly, an ANCOVA using the baseline (Fall 2006) PAS scores and race as covariates was conducted on the KCCT Mathematics subtest scores. Results indicated that the PAS [$F(1, 644) = 29.06, p < .001$] was a significant covariate. Race was not a significant [$F(1, 644) = 0.72, p = .40$] covariate. More importantly, again the Program effect was not significant [$F(1, 644) = 1.52, p = .22$], but effect sizes directly favored the Program group (see Table 4).

As performed for Reading, a sub-group analysis by number of service hours based on the median participation hours (i.e., regular attendee > 23.50) was conducted, using previous test scores and race as covariates. The ANCOVA performed on KCCT Mathematics by group (i.e., regular attendee, low attendee, comparison group) yielded significance for the PAS covariate [$F(1, 643) = 29.09, p < .001$], but not for race [$F(1, 643) = .69, p = .41$]. More importantly, an overall significant effect was not found [$F(2, 643) = 1.09, p = .34$]. However, KCCT mathematics test scores were directionally higher for regular attendees ($M = 443.74, SD = 81.24$), followed by low attendees ($M = 437.23, SD = 81.66$), and comparison students ($M = 430.25, SD = 82.02$). Relative to the comparison group, the effect sizes for the regular and low attendees were +.19 and +.17, respectively.

Insert Table 4 here

Service Provider Analyses. ANCOVA procedures controlling for prior achievement were conducted to assess the impact of specified service providers on Reading and Mathematics test scores. To ensure reasonable sample size and power for detecting statistical significance, analyses were conducted only for service providers having a total sample size equal to or greater than $n = 15$ in the target subject. Application of this criterion yielded 17 providers in Reading and 8 in Mathematics. The analytical procedure included the use of dummy-coded variables for each provider. Most of the variance was captured by the statistically significant previous achievement covariate (PAS), but significant results were obtained in several analyses, as described below.

In *Reading*, 2 of the 17 providers were associated with statistically significant effects:

- Huntington Learning ($n = .256$, $M_{\text{adj}} = 710.64$, $SD = 149.91$) had a *positive* adjusted effect size of $+0.34$, $F(1,509) = 8.07$, $p = .01$).
- Sylvan showed a positive trend ($ES = +0.18$) that approximated significance ($p = .06$).

In *Mathematics*, 1 of the 7 providers with sufficient sample size was associated with statistically significant results:

- Sylvan ($n = .256$, $M_{\text{adj}} = 444.14$, $SD = 81.36$) had a *positive* adjusted effect size of $+0.35$, $F(1,189) = 4.51$, $p = .04$).
- Huntington showed a positive trend ($ES = +0.47$) that approximated significance ($p = .07$).

Customer Satisfaction

District Coordinator Questionnaire. The JCPS district coordinator completed a questionnaire evaluating each provider. Aggregate results are summarized in Table 5. As can be seen in the first section concerning frequency of activity, the coordinator was generally quite positive. Specifically, from 88% to 92% of the providers were rated as frequently (a) communicating with the director, teachers, and parents; (b) meeting obligations; and (c) collaborating to set goals. The director further agreed or strongly agreed that the vast majority of providers (from 78% to 96%) complied with policies and expectations, and connected tutoring to classroom learning and the curriculum. On the two culminating items (“overall assessment”), the director agreed that 77% of the providers positively impacted student achievement and that 73% offered satisfactory services. The director’s open-ended comments ($f = 8$) dealt with generally minor problems involving particular providers (e.g., failing to inform parents about limited transportation space, and using an assessment weakly related to the tutoring program).

Insert Table 5 here

Teacher Questionnaire. A total of 78 open-ended responses were made regarding teachers' impressions of the providers. Half of these ($f = 39$) were informal or incidental remarks (e.g., "have heard of them," "my friend tutored for that company," "saw their ad," and "they have an office at the county center") that did not offer impression of provider activities or quality of services. Of the relevant responses, 27 related to provider communications with the respondents or others. Most commonly, teachers received written communications via mailed progress reports ($f = 8$). In fewer instances, teachers were contacted by phone ($f = 3$) or met with in person ($f = 3$). Exemplary responses were:

- Very detailed written report on the services provided to my student-very helpful information. Student's progress did accelerate.
- Phone & progress reports
- They sent info concerning a student's progress. No one contacted me personally.
- Have been contacted about students who have chosen this provider for extra tutoring. Have been sent reports and progress notes.
- They contacted me concerning the interventions they were engaging the student in to ensure that they were meeting the student's individual needs.

Of the responses relating to communications, nearly all appeared positive or at least neutral in attitude. The only somewhat negative tone was expressed in two comments conveying that although information about the students' progress was received from the provider, their opinions or input as teachers were not solicited.

An additional 12 comments expressed opinions about the provider or the benefits of the SES program. Of these 10 were positive and only 2 were negative. The latter responses concerned lack of progress by a student and misrepresentation of data by one of the tutors.

Among the most positive comments were:

- The program is very beneficial for all students that participate in their services. Not only do the students achieve academic success, but their social skills improve.
- I have had students in the past years tutored here and they are FANTASTIC!! Their methods go to the heart of reading issues and TRULY teach children to read and to become lifelong learners.
- I have had a good experience with this company for the past 4 years.

School Leader Questionnaire. There were 70 relevant responses from the school leaders.

Nearly all ($f=65$) dealt with some aspect of the providers' communication with the principal or others at the school. The most frequent responses in this category (52% of the total) conveyed that the providers sent information regarding students' individual plans and progress. Other representative responses included:

- Very good - they called for phone numbers of our students and corresponded with written progress reports.
- The provider was very interested in receiving feedback from the school about the students' performance to best meet their needs.
- Excellent - correspondence showing progress of our students

Of the 65 communication-related responses, 49 (75%) were classified as having a positive tone, 9 as neutral (14%), and 7 (11%) as negative. The latter expressed disappointment that the providers communicated only to document participating students or that communication occurred very late in the school year.

The remaining five comments, four of which were positive, offered reactions to the program. Examples are:

- Wonderful program for our kids, longtime relationship with this program prior to being a NCLB provider.
- Outstanding (program).

Parent Questionnaire. A total of 267 parent surveys with usable data were returned. Due to the survey administration being handled at the school level, predominantly by surveys being carried home by students, it is not known how many parents actually received surveys, and therefore, what the return rate was. Therefore, results must be viewed cautiously due to the respondent sample possibly being more involved with their child's tutoring or having stronger positive or negative reactions.

Parent responses to the close-ended items are summarized in Table 6. Overall, the responses are clearly positive about both the tutoring providers and the school district support, as reflected, for example, by:

- Almost 60% of parents indicating that the provider (a) talked to them frequently about their child's progress, and (b) frequently helped their child with regular school work.
- Over 70% indicating that notes or letters about their child's progress were sent home frequently or occasionally.
- About 87% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the tutoring helped their child's achievement.
- Almost 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were pleased with the tutoring services.
- About 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were pleased with the way that the school district helped them to obtain SES for their child.

Insert Table 6 here

Parents wrote 98 open-ended comments that reacted to the quality or effectiveness of the SES program. Of these, 68 were positive in tone, 24 were negative, and six were neutral. The primary positive theme conveyed that the tutoring was beneficial to the child; for example:

- I have been very pleased with the tutoring and that programs like this are available to help my daughter.
- I do like that my child was able to get tutoring. They [the provider] did so well that I will be using them this summer.

Negative comments reflected two themes—that the tutoring was ineffective or that the provider didn't communicate well; for example:

- My child was bored with the tutoring she received. She said she would often finish her work before time was up and they would cover stuff she already knew. We didn't attend for very long because she was bored.
- Would like to have more contact about how my child was progressing.

Discussion

Given the national interest in NCLB and SES in particular, it is important to examine the impact of the tutoring services provided on educational improvement and learning. Although studies conducted in fairly restrictive and controlled contexts often show positive benefits of individual and small-group tutoring, especially when provided by qualified adults (Fuchs et al., 2002; Green, Alderman, & Liechty, 2004; Ismail & Alexander, 2005), the demonstration of, and ability to detect, similar benefits in a large scale, federally mandated program remain in question.

Similar to other recent evaluations of SES (Potter et al., 2006; Potter, Ross, Muñoz, Paek, & McKay, 2007; Muñoz et al., 2008), the present results showed no achievement advantages for the SES participants on state-mandated test scores in reading and mathematics. Specifically, on the KCCT Reading subtest in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth grades, and the KCCT Mathematics subtest in the third, fourth, and fifth grades, SES participants were not significantly different than the matched control students.

Similar to other recent evaluations of SES (Potter et al., 2006; Potter et al., 2007; Muñoz et al., 2008), the present results showed only isolated achievement advantages for the SES participants on state-mandated test scores in reading and mathematics. Specifically, on the KCCT Reading subtest in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth grades, and the KCCT Mathematics subtest in the third, fourth, and fifth grades, SES participants across the 25 providers serving JCPS were not significantly different than the matched control students. The overall effect sizes were $-.05$ and $+.12$, in Reading and Mathematics, respectively, indicating small differences. However, there were isolated significant effects for two individual providers: Huntington Learning was associated with positive impacts in Reading and Sylvan had positive effects in Mathematics.

One possible explanation for the absence of effects is the limited duration of the tutoring activity relative to regular school programs and other educational experiences. A second, related explanation concerns the lack of sensitivity of high-stakes, standardized tests for assessing higher-order learning or gain on specific knowledge skills that may be taught (Linn & Miller, 2005). But a third, even more direct cause of limited program impacts would be failure to implement the interventions strongly or fully in the first place. Compared to the first-year evaluation (Potter et al., 2007), the reactions of stakeholders (district coordinator, school leaders,

teachers, parents) were much more positive, indicating improved efforts and some success by most providers in communicating about the tutoring and the child's progress and increasing the connection between the tutoring to regular classroom work. Nonetheless, the responses revealed many instances where tutoring sessions were cancelled or not implemented to the degree intended, parents were uninformed about tutoring options or their child's progress, and teacher or school leaders were barely aware (except through enrollment listings) that their students were even receiving SES tutoring. In only a few instances did a teacher or school leader indicate that the provider directly worked with them to determine the students' strengths and weaknesses in the regular classroom setting.

The strong suggestion from this research and other studies cited previously in this paper is that the relatively little contact and communication between providers and teachers raises some concern and would seemingly help to explain, in part, the absence of SES effects on achievement (e.g., Ross et al., 2008). The literature on school reform and educational program evaluation strongly emphasizes the importance of teacher buy-in (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Desimone, 2002) and connection between the new intervention and everyday classroom practices (Herman, 2006). For example, a student may learn during a tutoring session to solve a math problem in a manner that differs from, and creates interference with, the strategy taught by the regular teacher. As Slavin and Fashola (1998) indicated, creating conditions in which practitioners are involved in selecting, implementing, and evaluating programs "must be the primary goal of the entire reform process; any reform that stops short of the classroom door is unlikely to affect student achievement" (p. 92). Presently, most of the SES providers appear to be strengthening classroom connections in JCPS. This pattern might well be productive of more positive achievement gains over time.

The present findings are qualified by several factors. First, due to the inability to employ a randomized experimental design, firm causal conclusions cannot be reached. Sampling representativeness is limited by student choice in program enrollment and participation. As a result, it is difficult to isolate the impact of the SES program participation from other possible explanations for student achievement changes. For example, the participation and outcomes of students might be affected by teachers or parental involvement. Despite confounding variables, the systematic matching procedure and statistical controls should have established sufficiently strong internal validity for attributing differential group change more to the interventions than to potentially confounding intervening factors (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Shadish et al., 2002).

A second limiting factor was the shrinkage of sample sizes for both the SES and control groups due to incomplete testing data. Direct year-to-year comparisons of KCCT scale scores or proficiency levels are difficult because the reading and mathematics tests are given to particular grade levels. Our results indicate that only a small subset of SES and comparable students had test scores on the accountability grades. Differences of this sort could limit to whom we might generalize our results and, thus, might compromise the study's external validity.

In summary, the major conclusions supported by the present findings are:

- The overall effects of SES across providers were nonsignificant and small in comparison to similar non-SES students. For Reading, the overall effect size was -.05, indicating virtually no group differences; for Mathematics, the overall effect size was +.12, indicating a small-to-moderate directional (but nonsignificant) advantage for SES students.

- Regular vs. non-regular attendance at SES sessions did not improve Reading achievement. However, there was a directional but nonsignificant advantage for regular attenders in Mathematics.
- Individual provider results in Reading were mostly inclusive. Of the 17 providers that served 15 or more students, only one was associated with significant effects: Huntington Learning produced positive effects ($ES = +.34$). Of the 17 providers in the analysis, eight had effects that were positive in direction and seven that were negative in direction.
- Individual provider results in Mathematics were also mostly inclusive. Of the 8 providers that served 15 or more students, only 1 was associated with significant effects—Sylvan produced positive effects ($ES = +.35$). Of the eight Mathematics providers, three had effects that were positive in direction and five that were negative in direction.

In judging individual providers, it is again important to consider that the present quasi-experimental design does not permit control over student selection. Thus, it is entirely possible and very likely that certain providers served students who, due to personal characteristics, family conditions, and school experiences, were more at risk than others. Such factors cannot be equalized across providers via statistical adjustments. Further, sample sizes for individual providers were relatively small overall, and subject to error variance associated with multiple grades and schools. As the evaluation is replicated each new year, the aggregated outcomes should yield a more reliable picture of the individual provider effects.

As conveyed in several sections of this paper, one-on-one tutoring is an instructional strategy with high potential and long tradition for assisting low-achieving students (Ismail &

Alexander, 2005; Wasik, 1997). The effectiveness of SES as a specific large-scale tutoring program still remains to be determined given the relative newness of state implementations and the limited scientifically-based research conducted thus far. From a policy perspective, however, SES could be on a collision course with expectations that far exceed what an after-school program of limited hours can reasonably accomplish. Of the research conducted thus far, the most supportive evidence comes from the Rand study (Zimmer et. al., 2006), which obtained effect sizes from .08 to .09 in reading and math, and the Chicago Public Schools fourth-year study (OREA, 2008), which obtained overall effect sizes of .05 in reading and .12 in math. Perhaps, the true effect size of 30-40 hours per year (less than two weeks) of tutoring is only 5 to 10 one-hundredths of a standard deviation? Observing clear effects from the vast majority of applications, therefore, will be highly challenging. Analogously, one might conclude that gasoline is ineffective as fuel as a result cars failing to travel 100 miles on one gallon.

Based on these considerations, the focus on outcomes is not enough. Strong process-oriented evaluations might help explain the outcomes, but—more importantly—will ultimately lead to program improvements. Given the fact that information about program attendance was available, it was surprising not finding that high-attendance students did not show different results than the students who attended on fewer occasions. Future research should continue to include program attendance or amount of service hours to assess the impact of the “dosage” on student achievement.

States across the nation have developed their own SES provider lists and are required to evaluate provider effectiveness on student achievement. According to NCLB, at a minimum, states must remove providers from the approved list if they fail to increase student achievement for two consecutive years. In the high-stakes accountability environment, school districts are also

examining their SES programs to ensure that students receive quality services that, in turn, demonstrate an increase in student achievement in reading and mathematics. However, this is a challenge worth meeting. We need to test the assumption that requiring districts to contract with external organizations to provide remedial instruction to students in Title I schools will expand parents' choices and improve student achievement (Burch, Steinberg, & Donovan, 2007). It would be too easy — and a potential loss for at-risk and disadvantaged learners—to prematurely judge SES as unsuccessful because we do not yet have a preponderance of evidence to the contrary. Aside from determining what achievement gains are reasonable, it would also seem important to determine to what degree, if any, SES has beneficial impacts on additional educational outcomes such as students' motivation, learning goals, self-efficacy, classroom behavior and attendance, grades, and interest in their education in general.

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Table 1

Treatment and Comparison Students in Reading Matched on Key Characteristics (N = 2,540)

	<i>SES Students</i>				<i>Comparison Students</i>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Previous Test</i>	50.06	17.67	1,697		47.71	17.71	843	
<i>Gender</i>								
Female			840	49.50			405	48.04
Male			857	50.50			438	51.96
<i>Race</i>								
Minority			1086	64.00			592	70.23
Non-Minority			611	36.00			251	29.77
<i>Grade</i>								
3			60	3.50			35	4.20
4			160	9.40			64	7.60
5			175	10.30			60	7.10
6			482	28.40			259	30.70
7			357	21.00			200	23.70
8			359	21.2			158	18.70
10			104	6.10			67	7.90

Note. Only students with complete demographic and testing data were included in the analysis.

An aggregated matching procedure was utilized.

Table 2

Treatment and Comparison Students in Mathematics Matched on Key Characteristics (N = 648)

	<i>SES Students</i>				<i>Comparison Students</i>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Previous Test</i>	45.13	15.17	468		43.24	15.93	180	
<i>Gender</i>								
Female			249	53.21			88	48.89
Male			219	46.79			92	51.11
<i>Race</i>								
Minority			281	60.04			130	72.22
Non-Minority			187	39.96			50	27.78
<i>Grade</i>								
3			135	28.85			57	31.67
4			159	33.97			64	35.56
5			174	37.18			59	32.78

Note. Only students with complete demographic and testing data were included in the analysis.

An aggregated matching procedure was utilized.

Table 3

Summary of Analyses Comparing SES to Control Students on Student Achievement

Outcome Measure	Year	Analysis	Covariate(s)
Grades 3-8, 10 KCCT Reading	2006-2007	ANCOVA	Prior achievement on PAS (beginning of Grades 2-8, 10) and race
Grades 3-5 KCCT Mathematics	2006-2007	ANCOVA	Prior achievement on PAS (beginning of Grades 3-5) and race

Note. KCCT = Kentucky Core Content Test; PAS = Predictive Assessment Series.

Table 4

*Unadjusted and Adjusted Means and Standard Deviations for SES and Matched-Control**Comparisons on KCCT Scale Scores in 2006-2007*

<i>Comparison Group and Test</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M_{adj}</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>ES_{adj}</i>
<i>2006-2007 KCCT Reading</i>						
SES	1697	685.41	685.18	161.29		
					-0.05	-0.05
Control	843	693.62	694.07	164.71		
<i>2006-2007 KCCT Mathematics</i>						
SES	468	441.71	440.94	81.34		
					+0.14	+0.11
Control	180	430.25	432.25	82.02		

Table 5

District Coordinator Questionnaire Results

How many of your students did this provider serve this school year?					
	Number		Percent		
1-10	7		26.9%		
11-20	6		23.1%		
21-30	1		3.8%		
Over 30	11		42.3%		

In which subjects did your students receive services from this provider?					
	Number		Percent		
Reading/Language Arts only	6		23.1%		
Mathematics only	0		0.0%		
Both Reading/LA and Mathematics	19		73.1%		

How often does the provider...	%’s				Avg. Rating
	Frequently	Occasionally	Not at all	Don't know	
	4	3	2	1	
Communicate with you during the year?	92.3%	3.8%	3.8%	0.0%	3.88
Meet the obligations for conducting tutoring sessions?	92.3%	3.8%	3.8%	0.0%	3.88
Communicate with teachers during the school year?	92.3%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	3.85
Communicate with parents during the year?	92.3%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	3.85
Collaborate with you to set goals for student growth?	88.5%	0.0%	11.5%	0.0%	3.77

Table 5

District Coordinator Questionnaire Results, continued

	%s				Avg. Rating	
	Immediately	Within 2 weeks	Within a month	After a month		
	4	3	2	1		
Once the district finalized the contract with this provider, the provider started services.	0.0%	0.0%	57.7%	38.5%	1.54	
The provider...	%s					Avg. Rating
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
	5	4	3	2	1	
Adapted the tutoring services to each school's curriculum.	19.2%	57.7%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%	3.88
Integrated the tutoring services with classroom learning activities.	15.4%	65.4%	11.5%	7.7%	0.0%	3.88
Aligned their services with federal, state and local standards.	88.5%	7.7%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	4.81
Offered services to Special Education and ELL students.	88.5%	7.7%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	4.81
Complied with applicable federal NCLB laws.	88.5%	3.8%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	4.65
Complied with applicable state and (health, safety, civil rights) local laws.	92.3%	3.8%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	4.85

Table 5

District Coordinator Questionnaire Results, continued

Overall Assessment	%s					Avg. Rating
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
	5	4	3	2	1	
I believe the services offered by this provider positively impacted student achievement.	34.6%	42.3%	11.5%	7.7%	3.8%	3.96
Overall, I am satisfied with the services of this provider.	30.8%	42.3%	3.8%	15.4%	3.8%	3.69

Table 6

Parent Questionnaire Responses (n = 267)

How often does the provider...	% Frequently	% Occasionally	% Not at all	% Don't know
Survey Period	1	1	1	1
Talk to me about my child's progress?	59.9	26.2	10.1	1.9
Talk to my child's teachers about his/her progress?	20.6	19.5	17.6	39.0
Send letters or notes home to me about my child's progress?	36.3	34.5	23.2	1.9
Help my child with subjects s/he is working on in the regular school classroom?	60.7	19.1	12.4	4.9
Start and end the tutoring sessions at the scheduled time?	80.9	9.7	1.1	4.9

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following items about the provider.	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
	1	1	1	1	1
Survey Period	1	1	1	1	1
The provider started tutoring soon after I requested it.	46.4	36.7	7.9	6.4	0.4
I believe that the services offered have helped my child's achievement.	52.8	34.1	4.1	2.6	4.1
Overall, I am pleased with the services that my child received.	58.8	30.3	3.4	2.2	2.6

Table 6

Parent Questionnaire Responses (n = 267), continued

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following items about the school district.	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	% Don't Know
Survey Period	1	1	1	1	1
I was given information about my child's rights under the No Child Left Behind law.	50.6	36.7	2.6	3.0	4.5
I was given enough time to decide which service provider I wanted for my child.	50.9	36.3	4.5	1.9	4.1
I am pleased with the way my school district helped me obtain Supplemental Educational Services for my child.	55.8	34.8	2.6	4.1	0.7

Note: Item percentages may not total 100% because of missing input from some respondents.