



**LXDRESEARCH**  
AT CHARLES RIVER MEDIA

# STUDY SMART TUTORS

Research Foundation & Logic Model



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## **DEMONSTRATES A RATIONALE**

LXD Research Recognition for Study Smart Tutors



# **STUDY SMART TUTORS**

This product has been rigorously evaluated and is hereby acknowledged for meeting the educational impact criteria of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), warranting a **Level 4** for "**Demonstrating a Rationale.**" This recognition is based on its proven effectiveness in enhancing grade-level learning outcomes.

**REVIEWED BY THE LXD RESEARCH EXPERT REVIEW PANEL**

**CERTIFIED BY:**



**Rachel Schechter, Ph.D.**  
Founder of LXD Research

May 2026

**DATE**

**Educators search for high-quality research and evidence-based interventions to strengthen grant applications, to support comprehensive and targeted schools, or to implement new programming in their schools. Evidence requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various populations.**

Educational programs document their evidence of design, effectiveness, and impact in order to be eligible for federal funding. While there is no singular authority that determines a program's tier, the Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology provides standards to assess the varying levels of strength of research for education products.

The categories for ESSA Evidence are: strong (Tier 1), moderate (Tier 2), and promising (Tier 3) evidence of effectiveness, or demonstrates a rationale to be effective (Tier 4).

## This product meets the requirements for Tier 4:

- ✓ Documentation of how the product's design relates to intended outcomes, with corresponding academic, published research
- ✓ Describes the product's features and outcomes in a logic model
- ✓ A study is planned and/or currently underway
- ★ A third-party research organization has reviewed the documentation for ESSA validation



When product designers leverage learning sciences to design their programs, educators can better target instruction, and students' skills soar. Through interviews with the product designers, an evaluation of their research-informed activities, and a planning of an efficacy study, this product meets the criteria for LXD Research's ESSA Tier 4 Evidence.

– Rachel Schechter, Ph.D., Founder of LXD Research

## What is Study Smart Tutors' High-Impact Tutoring?

Study Smart Tutors works with schools and college access programs to provide in-school and after-school tutoring and intervention programming for thousands of students and families who might not have otherwise received it, preparing them for college, career and lifelong success. In-person, high-impact tutoring represents one of Study Smart Tutors' core service offerings to accelerate student learning. The approach integrates research evidence across three interconnected areas:



### Tutor Preparation & Ongoing Support

Study Smart Tutors provides tutors with multiple interconnected layers of preparation and guidance:

- preservice training that includes asynchronous coursework, live training, and how to support students in developing metacognition
- structured, ongoing support that includes consistent contact and structured observations
- High Quality Instructional Materials and training on evidence-based practices



### Relationship-Centered Program Design

Study Smart Tutors provides students and tutors with structures that prioritize relational trust alongside academic focus through:

- consistent tutor student pairing
- thoughtful matching
- relationship-centered training
- small groups with a maximum 1:4 ratio
- in-person sessions that occur at school



### Comprehensive Progress Monitoring

Study Smart Tutors is designed to systematically monitor student progress and use assessment data to inform instructional decisions throughout the tutoring cycle by providing tutors with:

- assessment tools
- tracking infrastructure
- interpretive support that translates student performance data into responsive teaching



Through its integration of research-based practices in tutor quality, relationship development, and data-driven instruction, Study Smart Tutors demonstrates a coherent model grounded in learning science with a mission to advance educational opportunity for all students.

## Built By Educational Leaders

### Jack Friedman



Jack Friedman is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Study Smart Tutors, an organization he launched nearly two decades ago to expand access to high-quality academic and college readiness support for historically underserved students. What began as a dorm-room initiative at the University of Southern California has grown into a national education services organization partnering with school districts, libraries, nonprofits, and community organizations to deliver evidence-aligned tutoring and college access programming at scale.

Jack has led the strategic expansion of Study Smart Tutors' services across diverse educational settings, building sustainable partnerships that increase opportunity, improve student outcomes, and strengthen implementation capacity for local partners. In addition to his leadership at Study Smart Tutors, he is a co-founder of Inspire EDU, Educational Gaming Services and Advanced Employment Group. Jack serves as Board Chair of the Tzedek America, and proudly serves as a board member of the GEAR UP Alumni Association and the Youth Business Alliance.

### Dr. Hulya Odabas, Ed.D.

Dr. Hulya Odabas is Chief Strategy Officer at Study Smart Tutors, where she partners with schools and districts to design tutoring programs aligned to student needs and district goals. She began her career as a high school teacher and later served as a school counselor in Title I schools. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry, a Master's Degree in School Counseling with a state credential in School Counseling (PPS), and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Concordia University Irvine. Her doctoral research focused on first-generation STEAM majors and their retention in college. Dr. Odabas has been closely involved in shaping Study Smart Tutors' High-Impact Tutoring model, aligning it with MTSS frameworks and ESSA evidence requirements.



### Jordan Vargas



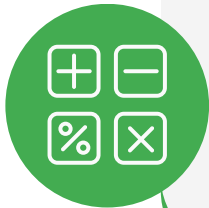
Jordan Vargas is Vice President of Education at Study Smart Tutors, where he leads the design and implementation of high-impact tutoring and intervention programs serving districts across multiple states. With more than a decade of experience as a mathematics educator and instructional leader, Jordan specializes in translating research-based practices into scalable, field-ready systems that drive measurable student growth. He oversees educator training, curriculum alignment, assessment strategy, and quality assurance to ensure strong implementation fidelity across diverse school contexts. A former secondary mathematics teacher and Teacher of the Year, Jordan brings classroom-grounded insight to large-scale program execution. He holds a B.A. in Mathematics for Teachers, a California Single-Subject Clear Credential in Mathematics, and an M.S. in Data Science, integrating instructional expertise with robust data systems to support continuous improvement and student achievement.

## Testimonials

What Educational Leaders are Saying about Study Smart Tutors

*“We utilized Study Smart Tutors’ small group, SAT tutoring, and were delighted to see that our students were incredibly engaged. Their tutors were reliable, credible, and professional. We can’t wait to implement SST into our curriculum this upcoming school year!”*

**– Gerra Murray, GEAR UP Coordinator at Lockhart ISD**



*“Telfair showed significant improvement in Mathematics on the SBAC. We increased by 24.7 points—moving from 81.7 points below standard in 2023 to 57 points below standard in 2024. This growth places Telfair solidly in the Yellow performance band, and we’re proud of the progress our students have made.”*

**– Eduardo Carrillo, former Principal, Telfair Elementary School**

*“Strongly recommend Study Smart Tutors for tutoring (in-class, after-school, and targeted models). They provide holistic tutoring directly to students, coach teachers in best practices, and are attentive to schedule changes or tutor change requests. We have used them for several years now across districts and schools.”*

**– Dominica Scibetta, EdD, Former Director of CSU Long Beach GEAR UP**



*“Study Smart was part of the intervention which helped improve academic gains specifically in math. But more than that, through their support, GEAR UP was able to build stronger bonds with students as our program followed the students for five more years. Students and families remember the support we provided as they have now continued in their postsecondary educational journey. Students remember the tutors, the tutoring support, and the care everyone in that intervention provided.”*

**– Rodolfo Acosta, PhD, GEAR UP Director**

## Study Smart Tutors Logic Model

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Achievement gaps in reading and mathematics remain significant. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), approximately 35% of fourth graders met reading proficiency standards in 2024, with lower rates among students in under-resourced communities. High-impact tutoring effectively accelerates learning when programs emphasize tutor quality, consistent relationships, and data-driven instruction. Study Smart Tutors provides evidence-based, in-person K-12 tutoring through systematic tutor preparation, High-Quality Instructional Materials, stable student-tutor pairings, and continuous standards-aligned progress monitoring.

### RESOURCES

#### Staff Resources

- Trained, community-aligned tutors who hold a Bachelor's degree (at minimum) and have a background in education or student support fields
- Program Managers who provide on-site support, regular check-ins, structured observations, and individualized coaching
  - Localized support systems including onsite program managers ensure greater program quality

#### Instructional Resources

- Standards-aligned curriculum for grades K-12
- All curriculum materials aligned to state-specific frameworks and the Common Core State Standards
- Leveled curriculum that allows tutors to adjust content and delivery to meet students where they are
- Proprietary, highly engaging instructional content designed for flexible delivery across learning environments
- Formative assessment tools embedded in curriculum

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

#### Program Design

- Aligned with [NSSA Design Principles for Accelerating Student Learning with High-Impact Tutoring](#)

#### What Tutors Do

- Complete comprehensive preservice training
- Commit to a consistent schedule to support uninterrupted instruction and stability of programming
- Deliver in-person, high-dosage tutoring:
  - 4–5 sessions per week
  - 30–60 minutes per session
  - 10–12 week cycles
- Maintain consistent tutor-student pairings throughout tutoring cycles
- Conduct standards-aligned pre-assessments, interim assessments, and post-assessments
- Track daily attendance and engagement via Presentify
- Record session reflections documenting student observations, misconceptions, and mastery levels
- Implement coaching feedback
- Participate in ongoing professional development
- Complete daily post-session surveys and receive prompt support from the Education team to discuss any concerns that arise

**RESOURCES**
**Technology Systems**

- Presentify, a proprietary progress tracking app that allows for real-time attendance and assessment tracking
- Tutors and Facilitators' Support Hub, an online portal where tutors can connect with one another and receive support
- Integrated digital platform for content access, assignment details, and internal support/communication

**Training Infrastructure**

- Comprehensive preservice training program for tutors that includes asynchronous and live instructional components
- Ongoing, seasonal professional development workshops for tutors

**STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES**
**What Students Do**

- Engage in small-group peer collaboration with structured interaction norms
- Complete formative assessments (exit tickets, guided practice observations, independent work reviews)
- Participate in collaborative goal-setting and give input on learning preferences
- Develop consistent attendance patterns and routines

**What Schools/Districts Do**

- Collaborate in program design and student selection
- Provide space for small-group instruction
- Share student assessment data for initial grouping and progress monitoring
- Participate in mid-program and end-of-program data reviews
- Receive transparent reporting on program effectiveness

**OUTPUTS**
**Tutors:**

- Track student learning and skill progression through continued use across 10–12 week cycles
- Identify and address individual student needs on weekly basis through data review
- Adjust instruction for striving students based on formative assessment data
- Collect comprehensive daily session data including attendance, engagement ratings, assessment scores, and reflective observations

**Students:**

- Achieve mastery of targeted ELA and math standards set for them at both "true level" and grade level
- Attend 4 - 5 sessions per week for 30 - 60 minutes over 10 - 12 week cycles
- Progress along skill sequence to increasingly complex standards
- Demonstrate improvements in engagement, confidence, and comprehension
- Build interpersonal communication, relationship skills, and self-awareness
- Build increasing independence while practicing targeted skills

## SHORT-TERM AND INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

### **Tutor Level:**

- Tutors gain detailed overviews of skill development for whole groups and individual students through Presentify dashboard and historical session data they collect.
- Tutors can promptly and accurately adjust instructional strategies, pacing, content delivery, and target specific skills for individual students based on weekly data reviews, a ladder-based curriculum, and built-in assessments.
- Tutors demonstrate improved instructional decision-making through observation feedback cycles.

### **Student Level:**

- Students advance fluency and proficiency levels in targeted ELA and math standards.
- Students demonstrate independence, confidence, and agency in learning.
- Students deepen engagement in learning through consistent, positive relationships with tutors.
- Students show improved attendance patterns and reduced chronic absenteeism.
- Students develop and maintain metacognitive skills through self-assessment of understanding, reflection on learning strategies that work for them, goal-setting, and self-monitoring.

### **Program Level:**

- Schools demonstrate measurable progress toward closing achievement gaps.
- Districts build capacity for evidence-based tutoring implementation.
- Programs achieve consistent fidelity across multiple sites through standardized training and observation protocols.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

### **Educational Equity:**

- Tutors provide more effective and targeted instruction for students, closing gaps in learning across demographic groups.
- Students from historically underserved communities gain access to high-quality, relationship-based instruction.
- Schools strengthen their capacity to support struggling learners through embedded, evidence-based interventions.

### **Student Development:**

- Students apply strong literacy and numeracy skills to academic tasks and real-world contexts beyond tutoring sessions.
- Students adopt a consistent sense of agency and growth mindset across learning environments.
- Students demonstrate increased academic self-regulation and ownership of their learning over time.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

### **Systemic Impact:**

- Schools and districts adopt evidence-based tutoring practices informed by the Study Smart Tutors model.
- The field of high-impact tutoring builds knowledge base on effective tutor preparation and support through Study Smart Tutors' participation in efficacy research.
- More students benefit from in-person high-impact tutoring as the model scales with fidelity.

## ASSUMPTIONS

### **Stakeholder Engagement:**

- Partner school names a site designee to bridge communication with other site personnel, students and families, and the Study Smart Tutors team.
- Students attend school and tutoring sessions consistently.
- District/school partners provide student assessment data and collaborate in progress monitoring.
- Families support student participation in tutoring.
- School leadership prioritizes tutoring program and provides necessary operational support.

### **Resource Availability:**

- Schools allocate dedicated time for high-dosage tutoring sessions (4–5 times per week).
- School sites have appropriate physical space for small-group instruction.
- Technology infrastructure supports use of Presentify for data tracking.

### **Program Fidelity:**

- Tutors implement curriculum and assessment protocols with consistency.
- Program Managers conduct regular observations and provide timely feedback.
- Data collection occurs daily and accurately through Presentify.
- The program maintains adequate tutor retention to ensure relationship continuity.

# Study Smart Tutors High-Dosage Tutoring Foundational Research Paper

## One-liner Product Summary

Study Smart Tutors offers an in-person, high-dosage tutoring program that leverages high-quality tutor preparation, strong tutor to student relationships, and effective progress monitoring to help K–12 students accelerate learning outcomes.

## Outline

- I. How Can This Research Foundations Paper Be Used?
- II. Key Points
- III. What is Study Smart Tutors' High-Dosage Tutoring Program?
- IV. Study Smart Tutors High-Dosage Tutoring Program Logic Model
- V. The Goal of Study Smart Tutors High-Dosage Tutoring Program
  - A. *Program Components*: Trained tutors with ongoing support, stable tutor-student relationships and thoughtful matching, standards-aligned curriculum materials, and data-driven progress monitoring
  - B. *Short-Term Outcomes*: Improved tutor instructional capacity, student skill mastery and confidence, and program fidelity across sites
  - C. *Long-Term Outcomes*: Educational equity through targeted instruction, student development of literacy/numeracy and agency, and systemic adoption of evidence-based practices
- VI. How Does Study Smart Tutors' High-Dosage Tutoring Program Help Students Learn?
  - A. *Quality Tutor Preparation*: Systematic recruitment, comprehensive preservice training, ongoing coaching, and curriculum-embedded instructional support
  - B. *Relationship-Based Learning*: Consistent pairing, holistic matching, relationship-building training, and structured peer interactions
  - C. *Progress Monitoring*: Three-phase formal assessments, curriculum-integrated formative assessments, and centralized data tracking through Presentify and integrated dashboarding.
- VII. Ready to Improve Your Students' Academic Achievement and Confidence?
- VIII. References

## How Can This Research Foundations Paper Be Used?

This foundational research paper aims to explain the innovative strategies, pedagogical approaches, and empirical evidence that inform the design of Study Smart Tutors' high-dosage tutoring program. This paper answers, "How was research used to create Study Smart Tutors?" by narratively describing the program's theory of action. The program components and its intended outcomes are framed in a logic model required as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). While the details of what is required for each federal funding program are slightly different ([Non-Regulatory Guidance document](#)), the information in this document should satisfy the requirements for "demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention." Each section in this paper details how Study Smart Tutors' high-dosage tutoring program engages students in learning, deepens their understanding of targeted ELA and math standards, transfers and extends these concepts and strategies to grade-level proficiency and real-world application, and strengthens students' ownership of their learning through metacognitive skills, academic confidence, and agency.

## What is High-Dosage Tutoring and Why Does it Matter?

The organizational principle "Educational Opportunity Matters" drives Study Smart Tutors' mission to provide high-quality educational services that create pathways for student success. Since 2009, Study Smart Tutors has worked to address persistent gaps in program accountability, tutor preparation, and evidence-based design within the tutoring landscape.

In-person, high-impact tutoring represents one of Study Smart Tutors' core service offerings. Tutoring cycles are designed in collaboration with schools and districts to support students in grades K–12 who require intensive academic support. The program combines trained, community-aligned tutors with standards-based curriculum, relationship-centered instruction, and systematic progress monitoring. By delivering tutoring primarily in-person, Study Smart Tutors eliminates common barriers such as transportation challenges, scheduling conflicts, and inequitable access to technology. The program emphasizes frequent sessions, small group sizes, relationship continuity, and data-driven instruction—all characteristics that research identifies as essential to effective tutoring (Nickow et al., 2020).

Study Smart Tutors has aligned their program with the [Design Principles for Accelerating Student Learning with High-Impact Tutoring](#) established by EdResearch for Action at the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. Additionally, Study Smart Tutors earned the [National Student Support Accelerator \(NSSA\) Tutoring Program Design Badge](#),



which emphasizes its research-aligned approach to tutor quality, instructional focus, relationship-building, curriculum selection, and progress measurement.

## How Does Study Smart Tutors' High-Dosage Tutoring Help Students Learn?

### Tutor Quality, Training, and Ongoing Support

#### *Why does tutor quality, training, and ongoing support matter?*

Meta-analytic findings demonstrate that tutor quality is one of the most significant predictors of student outcomes in tutoring programs. Programs that employ experienced, trained tutors produce significantly stronger student outcomes than those relying on minimally trained volunteers (Nickow et al., 2020). Beyond initial training, ongoing coaching represents another critical component of tutor quality. Kraft and



Blazar (2017) found that individualized coaching significantly improved instructional practice, with improvements translating into student achievement gains. Additionally, recent work on tutoring at scale underscores the importance of systematic training, consistent implementation, and ongoing quality monitoring as programs expand (Kraft et al., 2024).

#### *Summary*

Study Smart Tutors is designed to ensure tutor quality through systematic recruitment, comprehensive preparation, and sustained professional support. The program recruits tutors who hold a Bachelor's degree at minimum and prioritizes candidates with backgrounds in education or student support services. All tutors complete thorough preservice training that includes both asynchronous coursework and live training components that ensure tutors develop their theoretical understanding and practical skills before working with students. Following initial training, Program Managers provide structured ongoing support, maintaining consistent contact through regular check-ins, conducting structured observations using observation guides, and providing individualized coaching based on observation data. The observation guides are survey-based and include questions regarding the tutor's professional presentation, their demonstrated expertise of the content, level of engagement in the session, and specific instructional strategies used. As part of the observation guide, Program Managers also use a

corresponding rubric when observing tutors lead a session. Structured observation protocols that focus on specific instructional practices lead to more effective coaching than unstructured observations (Kraft & Blazar, 2017). These structured observations and coaching sessions happen at the beginning, middle, and end of a tutoring cycle. This ongoing support cycle ensures tutors continue to grow their skills throughout the program, consistent with research demonstrating that sustained coaching produces stronger outcomes than one-time training (Kraft & Blazar, 2017).

### *Deep Dive*

Study Smart Tutors serves as a comprehensive tutor development and support system by providing tutors with multiple layers of preparation and guidance.

### *Preservice Training*

Training covers the high-dosage tutoring model and standards-aligned curriculum implementation as well as formative assessment techniques to check for understanding during each tutoring session and throughout the cycle. Tutors learn how to build predictable routines and implement strengths-based language, which research shows helps support students who have experienced adversity (Thomas et al., 2019). Preservice training also covers cultural awareness, which is consistent with research regarding the creation of learning environments that include and honor all diverse student identities (Santamaria, 2009).

Tutors also learn to support students in developing metacognition — the ability to think about their own thinking and learning processes. When students develop metacognitive skills, they become better able to plan their approach to tasks, monitor their understanding during learning, and evaluate their performance going forward (Panadero et al., 2017). Training includes peer-to-peer collaboration strategies that structure productive group learning (Bransford et al., 2001), with tutors deepening their understanding through embedded collaboration strategies in the daily curriculum.

Additionally, tutors receive training in data collection protocols, learning to use Presentify, the organization's centralized tracking system, to document session data systematically.

#### Intro to Metacognitive Teaching



Another skill that we expect our facilitators and tutors to encourage in the classroom is metacognition.



- The term metacognition means thinking about how we think.
- Guiding students to develop the skill of metacognition is a critical component to academic and social emotional success.
- In the following two slides, we'll explore what metacognitive teaching can look like in the classroom.

### *Continuous Professional Development*

Following initial training, Program Managers are present on tutors' first day on site and provide structured ongoing support to tutors. They maintain consistent contact through regular check-in calls to discuss challenges and successes and conduct structured observations.

Tutors have access to an online portal where they can connect with one another and share successful strategies. They can also communicate with other educators and Program Managers through monitored chat channels. These structures create communities of practice where tutors learn from peers and access support when they need it, aligning to research showing that peer collaboration strengthens instructional practice and educator effectiveness (Kraft & Blazar, 2017).

### *Curriculum-Embedded Instructional Support*

The program's commitment to tutor preparation is also evident throughout its instructional materials. Study Smart Tutors utilizes a comprehensive curriculum system that aligns with the standards and frameworks of the states in which they operate. The curriculum is built on clear, research-based academic benchmarks and readily adapts to meet state-specific requirements. Materials are designed to be rigorous, inclusive, and accessible for tutors and students. Each lesson follows a structured format—Warm-Up, Direct Instruction, Guided Practice, Independent Practice, Exit Ticket – informed by Rosenshine's (2012) synthesis of effective teaching practices. This sequence builds in checks for understanding and ensures that new content is explicitly taught before students practice independently, with scaffolding gradually removed as students demonstrate readiness (Rosenhine, 2012).

The Study Smart Tutors curriculum embeds the evidence-based practices tutors learn during training. Think-Pair-Share activities increase student engagement by providing wait time for processing and opportunities for peer discussion (Rosenhine, 2012; Skinner et al., 2008). Students construct knowledge through dialogue and by articulating their reasoning to others (Bransford et al., 2001). Sentence stems like “First, I noticed that...” function as metacognitive scaffolds that help students verbalize thought processes, strengthening both content understanding and self-regulated learning (Panadero et al., 2017).

As seen in the example image, Grade 5 ELA instructor editions of curriculum materials provide explicit step-by-step guidance to support student learning. Materials include prompts to help students access prior knowledge, explicit instruction that clearly defines key terms, think-aloud modeling, guided practice with scaffolded support, tutor tips providing implementation guidance, sentence frames for multilingual learners, common mistake anticipation, and differentiation extensions. Emphasizing an asset-based approach and using empowering instructional language supports students' holistic development and helps build motivation for further learning (Murray-Orr & Mitton, 2023). Curriculum materials demonstrate strengths-based instruction throughout, with language emphasizing student capability and growth.



## English Language Arts TWB: Level F

5.L.1a

Pg 5

### 1) Step-by-step (UDL + SoR)

- **Schema activation:** Write 3 short sentences: *I like pizza. I like ice cream. I was hungry.* Ask students how to join them smoothly.
- **Explicit instruction:** Define conjunctions (connect), prepositions (show position/time), interjections (show emotion).
- **Think-aloud modeling:** Circle *and* in “I wanted ice cream and cake.” Explain: *and* links items. Show preposition in *on the table* and interjection *Wow!*
- **Morphology tip:** Use roots: *con-* (together), *position* (place), *inter-* (between). Helps memory.
- **Guided practice:** Students label words from examples in groups.
- **Independent:** Write 1 new sentence with each part of speech.
- **Tutor tip:** Emphasize function—what each word does, not just definition.

### 2) ELD strategies

- Icons: conjunction = chain link, preposition = arrow pointing, interjection = exclamation bubble.
- Frames:
  - “I like \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_.”
  - “The book is \_\_\_\_ the table.”
  - “\_\_\_\_! That was \_\_\_\_.”

#### Language: Conjunctions, Prepositions, and Interjections



##### I am Learning...

To understand what conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections do in a sentence, and to explain how they work in specific examples.

##### Key Concepts or Vocabulary

###### Conjunctions

**What they do:** Connect words, phrases, or clauses.

**Common examples:** and, but, or, because, so, although, if

**Examples:**

- I wanted ice cream and cake.
- She stayed home because she was sick.



###### Prepositions

**What they do:** Show relationships between a noun/pronoun and another word in the sentence. Often tell us about time, place, or direction.

**Common examples:** in, on, at, under, over, before, after, with, near

**Examples:**

- The book is on the table.
- We walked through the park.



###### Interjections

**What they do:** Show strong feelings or sudden reactions. Usually followed by a comma or exclamation mark.

**Common examples:** wow, oh, hey, ouch, hooray, yikes

**Examples:**

- Wow! That was amazing.
- Oh, I forgot my homework!



**Helpful Tip:** Look at the prefix or root of each word to remember what it does. “Con-” = “together,” “position” = a thing’s location, and “interject” = “say something suddenly or interrupt”

5

English Language Arts | 5.L.1a

## Relationship-Based Learning

### *Why does relationship-based learning matter?*

Positive relationships are critical to tutoring effectiveness, but rapport alone is insufficient. Research demonstrates that strong tutor-student relationships predict academic success through increased engagement and sustained effort, but only when paired with structured, goal-directed instruction (Lyons et al., 2018). Mentoring programs emphasizing emotional closeness without academic focus showed weaker achievement outcomes (Lyons et al., 2018).

The National Student Support Accelerator's synthesis of large-scale tutoring research emphasizes that relational trust is central to effective high-dosage tutoring. Strong, positive tutor-student relationships improve attendance, increase engagement, and enhance students' responsiveness to feedback (Robinson & Loeb, 2021). Students who experience strong relationships with their tutors show greater willingness to take academic risks, persist through challenges, and engage more deeply with learning (Lyons et al., 2018). Robinson and Loeb (2021) emphasize that consistent attendance is essential for building sustained tutor-student relationships that drive academic gains. Recent experimental evidence further demonstrates that in-person delivery supports higher attendance rates and stronger tutor-reported relationships with students (Hashim et al., 2025).

### *Summary*

Study Smart Tutors is designed to build and sustain strong tutor-student relationships through consistent pairing, thoughtful matching, and relationship-centered training. The program matches students with the same tutor throughout their 10–12 week tutoring cycle, with tutor changes made only when essential and managed with careful coordination to minimize disruption. Sessions are delivered in small groups with a recommended maximum ratio of 1:4 and occur in-person at school.



### *Deep Dive*

Study Smart Tutors serves as a relationship-centered instructional system by providing students and tutors with structures that prioritize relational trust alongside academic focus.

### *Relationship-Building Training*

Tutors receive comprehensive training in relationship-building practices. This training equips tutors with holistic development awareness that teaches tutors to recognize and respond to student emotions with empathy, establish safe environments through active listening, and build consistent routines. Training also addresses trauma-informed approaches, teaching tutors to recognize signs of trauma, use strength-based mindsets focusing on student growth, and avoid deficit-based language (Thomas et al., 2019).

### *Structured Peer Interactions*

Study Smart Tutors supports relationship-building through structured peer interactions embedded in each tutoring session. Think-Pair-Share activities and collaborative problem-solving create opportunities for students to engage with peers in academically focused ways. Culturally responsive instruction validates students' cultural identities while affirming lived experiences in academic content and creating conditions where students feel capable of success (Santamaria, 2009).

## **Progress Monitoring**

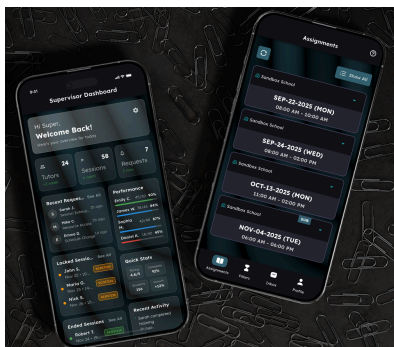
### *Why does progress monitoring matter?*

Research on effective progress monitoring demonstrates that assessment systems improve student outcomes when they provide reliable measurement, remain practical for regular use, and actively inform instructional adjustments (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). In addition to collecting data, tutors must receive structured support to accurately interpret results and translate findings into responsive teaching. Feedback can be one of the most powerful influences on learning when it is timely, specific, and addresses three critical questions: What are my goals? How am I progressing? What should I focus on next? (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When students receive this type of targeted feedback, they develop self-assessment capabilities and self-regulated learning skills that extend beyond individual tutoring sessions (Wisniewski et al., 2020; Panadero et al., 2017).

### *Summary*

Study Smart Tutors is designed to systematically monitor student progress and use assessment data to inform instructional decisions throughout the tutoring cycle. The program embeds progress monitoring through formal assessment cycles at three strategic checkpoints and regular formative assessments integrated into daily instruction. Formative assessments in daily instruction include guided practice, which helps tutors check for students' understanding and

respond accordingly, and exit tickets, which give a quick insight into students' takeaway understanding from the lesson (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Tutors input all data into Presentify, the program's centralized tracking system, which organizes information into visual representations showing progress over time. At each cycle's conclusion, program staff synthesize site-specific data into comprehensive reports presented to partner schools, creating opportunities for collaborative reflection about what worked well, which students require continued support, and how future cycles might be strengthened.



### *Deep Dive*

Study Smart Tutors serves as a comprehensive data-driven instructional system by providing tutors with assessment tools, tracking infrastructure, and interpretive support that translate student performance data into responsive teaching.

### *Assessment Cycles*

The formal assessment structure includes three strategic checkpoints. At the beginning of a tutoring cycle, tutors administer standards-aligned assessments to determine two important baselines: students' performance on grade-level content and their "true level," which is the point where students can work with appropriate challenge and support. Students performing below grade-level expectations are assessed at progressively less complex levels until they reach content where they are successful. This process identifies a realistic starting point for instruction while keeping grade-level standards as the target destination.

Mid-cycle, typically during weeks 5–7, tutors administer assessments focused on specific standards addressed during instruction. To be effective and useful, individuals who administer formative assessments need an adequate knowledge base and the support of instructional guides and materials (Bennett, 2011). To ensure that tutors are well-equipped to both administer and reflect on assessments, Program Managers review assessment results collaboratively with tutors. In these collaborative meetings, tutors evaluate whether students are progressing as expected, whether instructional groupings need adjustment, and whether particular students require added support. At the end of a tutoring cycle, students complete assessments at both their initial instructional level and their enrolled grade level, providing evidence of skill mastery and movement toward grade-level proficiency.

### *Curriculum-Integrated Formative Assessments*

In between formal assessment points, tutors gather evidence of student understanding through curriculum-integrated formative assessments. Research on effective teaching practices

emphasizes that strategies such as involving students in regular and guided review as well as monitoring students as they begin to work independently can increase student engagement and learning outcomes (Rosenshine, 2012). During guided instruction, tutors use strategic questioning to surface student thinking in real time, identifying confusion or misconceptions as they emerge. Brief tasks at the end of each lesson allow tutors to gauge whether students grasped the day's learning objective. When students work independently, tutors analyze responses for accuracy as well as for error patterns that reveal underlying gaps in thinking. Checking for understanding is a critical way to identify misconceptions early on and inform further instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Upper-grade students complete applied tasks that require them to synthesize learning across multiple sessions and reflect on their problem-solving approaches. These varied formative practices create many opportunities for tutors to understand student thinking and adjust instruction accordingly.


### *Centralized Data Tracking and Reporting*

Tutors input all data (formal assessments, formative observations, attendance patterns, and engagement) into Presentify, the program's centralized tracking system. Tutors document when students attend, how long each session lasts, how engaged students appear during instruction, and how students perform on specific standards. Presentify organizes this information into visual representations showing progress over time, allowing tutors to identify trends quickly. Site stakeholder dashboards attached to Presentify data extend access to school partners in order to provide real-time transparency into student progress, with family dashboards under development.

At the end of each cycle, program staff use Presentify to synthesize site-specific data into comprehensive reports presented to partner schools. These reports compare growth from the beginning to end of a tutoring cycle, highlight attendance and participation patterns, incorporate tutor observations, and include feedback from families collected through surveys. This systematic data sharing creates opportunities for collaborative reflection between Study Smart Tutors staff and school partners about what worked well, which students require continued support, and how future cycles might be strengthened. Program leadership analyzes patterns across sites to identify effective instructional approaches and refine tutor training accordingly, ensuring that data informs not just individual student instruction but continuous program improvement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

Study Smart Tutors is an in-person high-impact tutoring approach to accelerating student learning, focusing on tutor preparation and ongoing support, relationship-centered program design, and comprehensive progress monitoring.



The program addresses tutor quality and preparation through intensive training, sustained coaching, and continuous professional development. Stable tutor-student pairings, thoughtful matching processes, and relationship-building training create conditions for relational trust that is central to engagement and learning. By using a three-phase assessment system paired with continuous formative practices, Study Smart Tutors actively uses data to inform future instruction.

As the field of high-impact tutoring continues to expand, it becomes increasingly important to understand which program features most effectively support student learning. Study Smart Tutors plans to contribute to this growing evidence base through efficacy research examining program outcomes across diverse student populations and school contexts. Through its integration of research-based practices in tutor quality, relationship development, and data-driven instruction, Study Smart Tutors demonstrates a coherent model grounded in learning science with a mission to advance educational opportunity for all students.

## Ready to Improve Your Students' Academic Achievement and Confidence?

Use these questions to reflect on your current practice, considering the research featured in this paper.

- ❖ How do you currently provide intensive, small group academic support to your struggling students?
- ❖ Are your students engaged in interactive and motivating activities that build confidence, peer collaboration, and ELA and math skills?
- ❖ Do your lessons provide an efficient way to help students access grade-level standards while meeting them at their true instructional level?
- ❖ How do you monitor student progress in targeted ELA and math standards when they are learning through tutoring or supplemental instruction?
- ❖ Are your students demonstrating deep knowledge in the specific standards you are targeting?
- ❖ Are your students provided with clear feedback and support to develop metacognitive skills, self-assessment capabilities, and academic agency?
- ❖ Do your students have opportunities to practice their literacy and numeracy skills across various contexts?

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Dear Education Leader,

The Study Smart Tutors team is grateful for your interest in our high-impact tutoring. We are delighted you chose Study Smart Tutors to support your educators and students, knowing that many resource options are available.

We are excited to share our upcoming goal of assessing the efficacy of Study Smart Tutors and its impact on academic outcomes. To achieve this, we plan to conduct a research study on the product's effectiveness. The findings of this study will help us understand the impact of Study Smart Tutors and improve it to serve schools like yours better.

Please contact us to learn more details about the study and the terms of involvement. We hope you'll take advantage of this unique opportunity to help us shape the future of Study Smart Tutors. If you're interested or have questions, please get in touch with us to arrange a meeting.

Thanks in advance for considering our invitation.

Sincerely,

Jordan Vargas, Study Smart Tutors

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