



**Dean's Office  
College of Education  
3119 Benjamin Building  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742**

August 31, 2018

Chester Finn, Moderator, Work Group 3  
Joyce Shaefer, Moderator, Work Group 4  
Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education  
c/o Office of Policy Analysis  
Department of Legislative Services  
Legislative Services Building  
90 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Commissioners Finn and Shaefer and Members of the Commission:

As Associate Dean for Research and Innovation and Partnerships in the College of Education, University of Maryland College Park, I am writing on behalf of several members of the faculty of the College who are well respected and published scholars in areas related to the acquisition of literacy and mathematics. As researchers who have conducted multiple studies examining the efficacy of interventions in literacy and mathematics, we support the recommendations of both Workgroups 3 and 4 concerning the need to provide additional resources and instructional interventions to support struggling learners. However, we also want to clarify and challenge some of the assumptions regarding “tutoring” that appear in the recommendations and supporting documents of Workgroups 3 and 4.

We note that although the term “tutoring” is not explicitly defined in the Workgroup documents, it is generally interpreted as having one individual instruct another. Tutoring implies individualized or 1:1 instruction or perhaps 1 tutor for a very small group of students. In fact, effective interventions for struggling learners may be broader than a narrow definition of tutoring. Therefore, we suggest that a more appropriate term be “supplemental” instruction, sometimes referred to as “Tier 2” instruction in a multi-tiered model of intervention. Tier 2 or supplemental instruction is defined as any instructional program or intervention that is provided over and above the core classroom instruction to a relatively small number (less than the entire class) of students who are failing to make sufficient progress in a rich instructional environment. Successful supplemental programs rely first on high quality effective classroom instruction followed by careful data collection and decision making about which students should receive additional instruction and for what skills. It is also important that the progress of students in supplemental instruction be carefully monitored to ensure that it is effective for them. However, the most important component is the quality of the instruction itself...regardless of whether it is “tutoring” or another program. Poor quality supplemental instruction will not likely produce proficient readers (e.g., Metis Associates, 2011).

Supplemental instruction must be demonstrated to be *much* more effective than the core classroom instruction, otherwise it becomes even more damaging to a child's progress. It must be of sufficient quality, intensity, frequency, and duration and show that that nearly every struggling student succeeds. Given those criteria, it is important to consider the supplemental programs that have met the standards set forth in ESSA and the Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). One example of a tutoring program that meets the criteria is Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) which has been shown to be improve achievement in literacy and mathematics.

However, research does not show tutoring to be more effective than other supplemental programs in either reading or mathematics (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes & Watson, 2000). For instance, Coddling and Lane (2015), in reviewing the effectiveness of supplemental instructional programs in literacy, conclude that the short-duration, narrowly focused interventions *have been unable to substantially improve* reading outcomes in either the short or long term. Weak supplemental reading interventions, especially those that pull students from core reading instruction or cover only a small portion of the school year, will not likely provide sufficient time or intensity to reduce the likelihood of severe reading problems among struggling readers (e.g., Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Case et al., 2010; Gilbert et al., 2013; Kerins, Trotter, & Schoenbrodt, 2010; McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2005).

A further concern about the "tutoring" recommendations, specifically Workgroup 4, is the focus solely on literacy. Again, research supports the need to give the same attention to students who struggle in mathematics. There is sufficient evidence that mathematics achievement is an "academic gateway" meaning that early mathematics achievement is predictive of later achievement (see Purpura, Hume, Sims & Lonigan, 2011; Watts, Duncan, Siegler, & Davis-Kean, 2014). In fact the relation between early mathematics knowledge and subsequent achievement in either mathematics or reading is stronger than for early reading knowledge, although both are significant (Duncan, Dowsett, Claessens, Magnuson, et al., 2007).

We do know that early academic achievement in reading *and* mathematics are not only important individually but also necessary for acquiring knowledge in other subject areas (Brown & Murray, 2005). Furthermore, mathematics and reading may be important in the development of each other (Piasta, Purpura, & Wagner, 2010; Simmons & Singleton, 2008) and are predictive of achievement over the long term. Therefore, it is important to ensure that resources support evidence based supplemental instruction in mathematics.

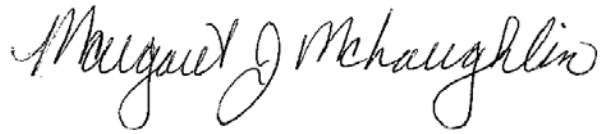
The posted documents supporting the draft recommendations of Workgroup 4 suggest that the supplemental instruction (e.g., "tutoring) be provided to small groups of students. Although small-group instruction has been demonstrated to be beneficial in remediating struggling students, the research has been mixed on whether 1:1 yields substantially different results than other small group configurations. Vaughn, Cirino, et al. (2010), for example, did not find an association between group sizes and outcomes for students in Grades 7 and 8.

Finally, for both literacy and mathematics, we strongly support beginning the supplemental instruction earlier than kindergarten if possible. The importance of supporting children in acquiring literacy skills is well known (see Institute for Literacy, 2008). With respect to mathematics, we do know that significant deficits in basic skills predict math achievement all the way into adolescence and these gaps are not easy to close in 2nd or 3rd grade because the skillset is so varied and complex by those grade levels (Jordan, Kaplan, Ramineni & Locuniak, 2009).

As the Commission considers the recommendations of Workgroups 3 and 4 pertaining to "tutoring", it is important to consider the evidence that supports the recommendations as well as the design assumptions that have cost implications.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and please feel free to be in touch if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret J. McLaughlin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Margaret J. McLaughlin, Ph.D.  
Professor, Special Education  
Associate Dean for Research and Innovation and Partnerships

Cc: Jennifer K. Rice, Dean