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## Decentralization and the Efficacy of Intervention Strategies to Promote Academic Recovery

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# Decentralization and the Efficacy of Intervention Strategies to Promote Academic Recovery

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We focus on a district that encouraged schools to set aside part of the school day (“intervention blocks”) for academic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some schools also chose to provide tutoring services that were mostly in groups of four or more students and typically held outside of normal school hours. We find that longer intervention blocks led to improvements in math and reading achievement for struggling students, but increases in the length of tutoring sessions did not boost math or reading achievement for struggling students.

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## What did we learn?

Intervention block use and duration, along with the adoption and duration of tutoring, varied considerably in elementary and middle schools.

We find that the amount of time per week that schools devoted to intervention blocks and tutoring did not vary systematically with the proportion of students who experienced large reductions in student achievement growth or with the characteristics of the principal.

Increases in the time devoted to intervention blocks are associated with improvements in math and reading achievement growth for struggling students, though magnitudes of the gains are modest. Increases in the weekly duration of tutoring sessions did not boost math or reading achievement for struggling students.

## What are the policy implications?

Districts should consider building better monitoring systems for interventions. Lack of individual-level participation data hindered our ability to precisely estimate program impact or measure effects across students. Additionally, districts should limit eligibility and/or expand available resources to keep tutoring groups small. Districts should also consider the limitations of a decentralized approach. School administrators may have less information about an intervention’s efficacy and face challenges in organizing implementation and tracking participation.

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### Researcher

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## What questions did we answer?

1. To what extent are school-level decisions about the frequency, duration, and use of intervention periods and tutoring services correlated with the characteristics of school leaders and the students they serve?
2. Is the intensity of use of intervention periods and tutoring associated with improvements in student achievement growth?

## What data did we use?

We used administrative data for elementary and middle-school students from a metro-Atlanta school district in SY 2022–23 that included student characteristics and math and reading scores on a nationally normed formative assessment. We combined these data with responses from a principal survey conducted in summer/fall 2023 that provides information on the time devoted to pandemic recovery strategies and about in-school tutoring programs.

## Why is this issue important?

As federal COVID relief funds run out, districts face critical decisions on which programs to continue with local funds and which programs to scale back or eliminate. Evidence on the efficacy of recovery efforts is crucial to determine how best to allocate scarce but vital local resources.

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## Want to learn more?

A report is available at  
[gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications](https://gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications)

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The **Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE)** is a component of the **Georgia Policy Labs (GPL)**, a research collaboration between Georgia State University and a variety of government agencies committed to leveraging the power of data to drive policy and programmatic decisions that lift children, students, and families—especially those experiencing vulnerabilities.

## Suggested citation

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