

# ***Implementing Supplemental Educational Services: Opportunities and Challenges***

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***A Policy Brief Prepared by the  
Supplemental Educational Services Quality Center  
www.tutorsforkids.org***

## **What are Supplemental Educational Services?**

**U**nder the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, low-income children in Title I schools that have been identified as *needing improvement* can receive supplemental educational services (SES). These free tutoring services must be offered to students from low-income families who attend Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP)—defined by the state—for at least three years.

The SES provision expands options for parents of low-income children by enabling them to seek out free, effective tutoring services. Supplemental educational services offer students extra help in academic subjects such as reading, language arts, and mathematics. The services are generally provided outside the regular school day—before or after school, on weekends, or in the summer.

*The SES provision expands access to high-quality tutoring programs by giving low-income families the opportunity to choose free, quality services for their children.*

In 2004, this free tutoring program will offer increased choice and educational opportunities to thousands of students in schools throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> Many more students will be eligible in the coming year. Currently, nearly 1,400 service providers have been approved nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

This policy brief summarizes the SES provision, outlines key challenges to the successful implementation of the program, and offers ideas to turn these challenges into opportunities to help eligible children benefit from supplemental educational services.

## **How does SES work?**

As part of NCLB, each state sets its own definition of adequate yearly progress, the minimum improvement that districts and schools must reach every year on state achievement tests. Title I schools that do not show AYP for three years or more must offer SES to students.

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<sup>1</sup> Some states post lists of schools that have not made adequate yearly progress, but do not clearly indicate which of these schools are required to provide SES. In the 29 states that have posted clear lists of schools not making AYP that allow for an accurate count, more than 2,000 schools are required to provide SES in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates of the number of state-approved providers vary, with the resulting total ranging from approximately 1,400 to 1,800 providers. The figure of 1,400 was derived by counting each approved provider only once in each state. Thus, a national provider of services with several approved local branch offices was counted only once in our tally. As a result, the maximum number of times that a provider can be approved in our count is 52 — all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Each state identifies schools that do not make AYP for at least three years, and the school district determines which students in that school are eligible for the services.<sup>3</sup> SES is available to low-income students in the school—generally, those students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Once a district determines which students are eligible, the district notifies families that their child qualifies for SES. The district must also provide information about the local SES providers to help families select one.

If families ask for assistance, a district must help them choose an SES provider. Once a family chooses a provider, the district enters into a contract with the provider and pays for tutoring services. If more eligible families request SES than existing funds can support, districts must give priority to the lowest-achieving low-income students.

## Who is providing SES?

Each state develops a list of potential SES providers. To get on this list, providers must be approved by the state. States choose providers that offer high-quality, research-based tutoring services in line with state standards.

Many providers will offer “hands on” tutoring by trained instructors. Others may offer Internet-based instruction that students can access through a computer—in a school, at a community center, or at home.

Once a family chooses a service, the provider, the school, and the district meet with the family to agree on performance goals for the child and a schedule for services.

*SES providers can be any type of public or private entity:*

- *Non-profit groups*
- *For-profit companies*
- *Local community programs*
- *Colleges or universities*
- *National organizations*
- *Faith-based groups*
- *Private and charter schools*
- *Public schools and districts that have shown AYP*

## Why tutoring?

Research suggests that quality tutoring, similar to services that might be offered under SES, can benefit low-income, at-risk students in a number of ways:

- ***Improved student achievement and work habits.*** By building on learning taking place during the school day, tutoring can help children improve their academic achievement. For example, Policy Studies Associates found that students who participated in an after-school program in New York showed a “significantly greater gain on citywide math tests than similar nonparticipating classmates.” Students at greatest academic risk made the most significant gains.

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<sup>3</sup> If a Title I school does not make AYP for two years, it must offer all students in that school the opportunity to transfer to another public school that is not in need of improvement. Additional information on the “choice options” provided by the No Child Left Behind legislation are available on the U.S. Department of Education’s website at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/about/choice.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/about/choice.html).

- **Individual instruction focused on specific student needs.** Some students may not learn well in traditional classrooms and, through tutoring, can learn in different, perhaps more effective ways. According to Mass Insight Education’s report on high school academic remediation in Massachusetts, many students say that tutoring provides a more individualized approach, a difference in curriculum, and the extra attention that they were not receiving during school hours.
- **Reduced incidence of delinquent or risky behavior.** Tutoring offers students a safe, nurturing environment outside of school. Researchers at the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, a project of Howard University and Johns Hopkins University, found that after-school programs significantly lower youth involvement in risky behaviors “including a lowered incidence of drinking, smoking, using drugs, having sex, and becoming involved in violence.”
- **Improved social and behavior skills.** Johns Hopkins University researchers also found that after-school programs significantly increase positive social and behavioral adjustments, better relations with peers, more effective conflict resolution strategies, and increased parent involvement.

Finally, by helping individual students improve, SES can also support teachers and principals as they work to improve entire schools and districts.

*A national poll by the C.S. Mott Foundation found that Americans overwhelmingly support after-school and tutoring programs in all schools.*

## Implementing SES – Challenges and Opportunities

Nearly all states have posted applications for potential providers online, and most states have issued lists of approved providers. However, states and districts continue to tackle a number of challenges to implementing successful SES programs:

- Reaching out to families to increase the number of children benefiting from SES
- Offering clear and complete information to help families compare and choose a provider
- Encouraging more local groups to become SES providers, especially in rural areas
- Coordinating timing and communication among states, districts, providers, and families
- Developing systems to monitor the quality and effectiveness of provider services

The remainder of this brief outlines actions that states and districts can take to turn these challenges into opportunities.

## Turning Sanctions Into Strategy

Unless a lesser percentage of funds are needed to meet parental demand for SES, districts must spend up to an amount equal to 20 percent of their Title I, Part A allocation on SES and transportation related to the public school choice provisions of NCLB. Some districts have expressed concern that these Title I funds, which they had allocated for other purposes in past years, will now be “lost” because of SES.

However, districts that have put a priority on providing extra academic help and individual instruction to low-income children find that the benefits of SES programs greatly outweigh any perceived costs. Ultimately, this tutoring can help children become more productive, successful students in their regular classrooms. By helping individual students improve, SES offers teachers and principals the support they need to lead their entire schools to academic improvement. When districts incorporate SES into their improvement strategy, spending money on SES becomes an effective investment tool to boost student achievement.

*Districts that put a priority on increasing student achievement find that the benefits of the SES program greatly outweigh any perceived costs.*

## Increasing the Supply of Quality Providers

The SES provision encourages a variety of groups to become state-approved supplemental educational service providers. The nearly 1,400 already approved providers nationwide represent a broad range of organizations, including public and private agencies. Although this number is encouraging, many parents still have a limited number of providers from which to choose. Currently, choices are limited when children attend schools in geographically isolated areas or in states with few approved providers. In addition, many potential providers have not yet entered the “market.” Often they are not aware of this new opportunity, sometimes encounter barriers in application process or the administration of the program, or have not yet developed the capacity to serve a large number of students.<sup>4</sup>

States and districts continue to work toward expanding the range of options available to parents by improving the publicity regarding the opportunity to become a provider, giving technical assistance to potential providers during the application process, and offering an ongoing or “rolling” application process.

Organizations such as the Afterschool Alliance, the Education Industry Association (EIA), and The Finance Project are helping by encouraging a variety of groups to become state-approved providers. Districts and community groups are also helping local organizations navigate the state application process. Some states, districts, and organizations are convening meetings to offer providers the opportunity to network and share successful strategies.

## Reaching Out to Families

Early evidence suggests that eligible families in many districts are receiving confusing or limited information about their tutoring options and have few resources to help them choose the best provider for their child. School districts can help inform eligible families by offering clear, consistent information in the following areas:

- How to select a provider
- What services each provider offers, including how many hours of services
- When families must sign up for services to meet the deadline

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<sup>4</sup> The Supplemental Educational Services Quality (SESQ) Center ([www.tutorsforkids.org](http://www.tutorsforkids.org)) is currently conducting research to help determine the factors that help and hinder entry of new providers into the SES “market.”

When possible, districts should give families this information in language(s) that they can understand and give them sufficient time to enroll their children. To achieve higher participation, districts may wish to consider rolling admissions policies that allow parents to enroll children throughout the school year.

Effective strategies to tell eligible families about their options are required for SES to succeed. States, districts, community groups, and providers are meeting this challenge by supplying information through traditional and non-traditional channels:

- Letters from the district or school
- School newsletters
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Websites
- Phone calls
- TV, radio, or newspaper ads
- Parent organization meetings
- Posters and flyers at schools, businesses, and community centers around the district
- “Open houses” or provider “fairs” for families to meet providers and learn more about their services

Local providers, community groups, and districts are also working to reach out to families at places they visit often:

- Community centers
- Places of worship
- Grocery stores
- Bus and subway stops
- Beauty salons and barbershops

*To ensure that SES works well, states, districts, schools, community organizations, and providers should work together to make sure parents*

- *know what supplemental services are available and how to use them,*
- *have sufficient time to decide whether to take advantage of SES, and*
- *receive solid guidance so that they can make the best choices in the interests of their children.*

## Working Together

District and state education officials and providers all play a key role in making SES work. By sharing information and coordinating activities, they can significantly improve how well SES operates in practice. States can help districts by

- obtaining district input in the provider application process;
- giving districts clear, consistent information about local providers;
- coordinating the timing of notification about eligible schools and approved providers to correspond with district timelines;
- developing sample materials for communicating with eligible families and contracting with providers; and
- creating opportunities for officials from different districts to exchange information and materials on SES.

Districts can help states by

- offering input about the criteria and process for approving providers;
- encouraging local organizations to apply to become SES providers;
- giving materials developed by the district to state officials to help other districts implement SES; and
- sharing feedback and data about provider effectiveness with state officials responsible for evaluating providers.

Districts and providers can also help each other:

- Districts can invite providers to open houses and provider “fairs” at schools and allow them to pass out information to parents.
- Providers can give districts clear information about the structure and content of their services so that districts can pass on this information to parents.
- Districts can allow providers to use space in schools, free or at reasonable cost, to deliver services.
- Providers can inform teachers about student progress regularly and seek teacher input.
- Both providers and districts can set reasonable terms for their contract agreements.

At the national level, the Supplemental Educational Services Quality (SESQ) Center—a project funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education—is working with a number of organizations to provide sample materials, networking opportunities, training, and other assistance to help states, districts, and providers improve the implementation of the SES program.

## Conclusion

States and districts have made progress toward successfully implementing supplemental educational services. Clearly, major challenges lie ahead in raising the demand for SES, increasing the supply of quality providers, and improving coordination among those responsible for SES implementation. By creatively working to turn these challenges into opportunities, states, districts, providers, and families can help ensure that eligible children get the extra academic help and individual instruction they need.

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### **About the SESQ Center**

The Supplemental Educational Services Quality (SESQ) Center helps low-income families take advantage of a new opportunity provided by the No Child Left Behind Act to get their children free tutoring and extra academic help they may need. The Center was established through a grant to the American Institutes for Research from the Office of Innovation and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education.

To meet the challenges of implementing supplemental educational services, the SESQ Center works to

- increase the number of eligible children receiving free tutoring;
- expand the number and range of high-quality tutoring services offered; and
- improve district, state, and national coordination of the program.

The SESQ Center provides technical assistance at the local and state levels through a network of demonstration districts and states. At the national level, the SESQ Center created a network of organizations to coordinate and improve research and assistance on supplemental services. The SESQ Center website, [tutorsforkids.org](http://tutorsforkids.org), turns “lessons learned” into tools and resources on effective supplemental services implementation that can be replicated by other districts and states.

**Website: [www.tutorsforkids.org](http://www.tutorsforkids.org)**  
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