

## The compounding impact of the tutoring center model (Koselak)

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Jeremy Koselak, January 2015

(excerpted from book on tutoring center model to be published in 2016)

Indeed, the evidence is mounting about leveraging the power of peer tutors. In *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* (2012), John Hattie combs through a meta-analysis of education research taken to the extreme to compile a list of high impact influences on student achievement. The average of all effect sizes in Hattie's analysis is around .4 (approximating one grade level gain per year). This is the theoretical tipping point; half of what happens to all students is below that .4, and half above it. Schools would be wise to evaluate their own effect sizes and train teachers to deeply evaluate their instruction in collaborative teams to "know thy impact", striving for an impact above the .4 threshold (and he provides a simple formula to do so\*).

Hattie catalogues and analyzes a large bank of high value items, many of which support the backbone of the peer tutor centered tutoring model presented in this book. To be clear, John Hattie's analysis isn't a survey of a few studies; it is a meta-analysis of meta-analyses, covering 800 meta-analysis of 50,000 research articles. The work looks at effects resulting educational and other effects upon 240 million students over decades and continents.

This book illustrates how to implement many of Hattie's most powerful recommendations (and how to create conditions for many more), emphasizing those influencers that maximize impact at a relatively low cost. For instance, establishing peer tutoring in the classroom (.55) and student centered learning (.54) are part of a larger structure that empowers micro-teaching (.88). Peer tutors and teachers that focus on meta-cognitive strategies (.69) in the tutoring process and explicitly look at errors as key to clarify misunderstandings bring about significant achievement gains. To further leverage the power of peer tutors, teachers should expand upon their system of frequent formative assessment to guide and inform everyone's effort around achievement (.75).

A teacher that empowers a culture of shared responsibility and formative assessments, with the support of peer tutors can subsequently integrate Response to Intervention (1.07) and track progress to improve instruction. The tracking of progress and impact (and of course responding to it) leads to the goal of "knowing thy impact", creating the ideal conditions to transform education:

"The more the student becomes the teacher and the more the teacher becomes the learner, then the more successful are the outcomes." (Hattie, 2009: 25-6)

The process of embedding formative assessments coupled with frequent, actionable feedback, empowered through peer tutoring, leads to a far more important outcome: increased student self-efficacy. Students begin to see they can learn and grow by putting forth additional time and effort. This must be the aim of the peer tutor model, that students become convinced they can learn and have the ability to grow (including peer tutors, who experience exceptional growth in the process as well!). This efficacy piece amounts to the greatest effect size of all the studies (1.44), amounting to three and a half grade level improvement. In other

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words, every facet of a peer tutoring model has a high effect size unto itself, but when leveraged, peer tutoring further empowers teachers and schools to put in place even higher effect practices that bring about sustainable and meaningful improvements to learning outcomes.

Ultimately, however, educators usually need more convincing than the battle cry that something is “research based”. That phrase and others like it are so ubiquitous that they fail to sway some to action. We educators need applications of the research, practical approaches we can mold to fit our settings and styles. We need approaches that don’t place additional burdens upon teachers, given that we are tasked with teaching deeper and broader, with fewer resources and minimal time to collaborate. Factor in that educators are trying to reach a population that is increasingly diverse and often subjected to the overwhelming impact of poverty (.52) and the challenge feels overwhelming at times. So we must implement practices that are simple, sustainable, scalable and, as Mike Mattos frequently implores, “more powerful than poverty.”

As a way to respond to the various challenges, the tutoring center model is a low cost, scalable, high impact model that helps students move beyond surviving, to thriving in school. In particular, it

- Creates a coalition of volunteer tutors,
- Is grounded in research,
- passes the cost benefit analysis with flying colors,
- is pretty simple to start up and sustain
- can fit into a variety of settings
- will support capacity building and collaboration in schools beyond imagination
- incurs many other incidental benefits, including improvements to
  - PLCs and collaboration
  - growth mindset
  - service learning
  - fostering leadership

But most importantly, the tutoring center model creates a welcoming and safe place for all students to get quality, personalized support all day every day, without breaking the backs of teachers or school budgets.