



Bridging the Gap: Innovative Solutions for Inclusive Tutoring

A case study of Bedford School District and Tutor.com based on an interview conducted with Superintendent Michael Fournier



Focus on Achievement

Located in Bedford, New Hampshire, Bedford School District (BSD) is focused on driving academic achievement and developing a community of curious, resourceful, and respectful learners.

With a history dating back to the 1800s, the district is the third-largest in the state and serves the educational needs of about 4,200 students across three elementary schools, one middle school, one intermediate school, and one high school.

Consistently ranking among the state and national top school districts, BSD has a student body that routinely exceeds state averages on assessments like the M-STEP and MME.



Breaking Through Homework Frustrations

Superintendent Michael Fournier knows firsthand how frustrating complex subjects can be for students and families alike. “I remember the days of sitting at my dining room table with a crying ten-year-old because I didn’t know how to do lattice multiplication, and that’s what he had to do,” Fournier recalled. **“While parents are pretty good with homework in grades one through three, fourth grade and beyond can present complexities that require an expert outside the household.”**

The frustrations mount as students move up to higher grades. “When you get into subjects like algebra, geometry, calculus and biology, everything gets more advanced,” said Fournier. **“Families want to help their kids, but they just don’t quite know how to do it.”**

These issues really came to light during the COVID-19 lockdowns, when parents were transformed into teachers, tutors, and homework helpers overnight. By the time students headed back into the classroom, many were grappling with learning loss and struggling to catch up. Tutor.com’s [Algebra Trends](#) white paper revealed a sharp uptick in demand for math tutoring beginning during the pandemic. By 2021, the average K-12 American student was five months behind in math and four months behind in reading, according to [McKinsey & Company](#).

The pandemic had a disproportionately high impact on students of color and those living in low-income households. For example, students at majority-Black schools fell six months behind in math and five months behind in reading, while children in low-income urban districts fell further behind compared to their peers who attend high-income rural and suburban schools, McKinsey also reported.

Online Tutors to the Rescue

There has always been significant demand for math tutors, science tutors, and SAT® prep tutors at BSD, which was dealing with some learning loss post-COVID. Of course, the district was not alone in its plight; schools worldwide faced similar issues. Knowing this, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHED) began looking for an online tutoring program that could be rolled out to all of its students in grades 4-12, across all of its schools and education programs.

After exploring the available options, NHED decided to partner with Tutor.com to implement a tutoring program for all middle and high school students. And with that, all of those students gained unlimited access to 24/7 individualized expert tutoring.

Fournier said he was instantly impressed with the selectivity that Tutor.com uses when choosing tutors. **“When I understood the level and the rigor of application for Tutor.com’s tutors, it seemed more rigorous than many hiring processes throughout the country,”** he said.

“I felt very confident that I would let my own kids interact with the tutors on Tutor.com based on the way the interface was set up,” Fournier continued. “From my point of view, selecting Tutor.com was a no-brainer.”



Leveling the Playing Field

Being situated in a relatively affluent community, BSD serves many families who can afford to pay \$70-\$75 an hour (or more) to hire private tutors for their kids. But not all families have the available resources to help bridge educational gaps for their kids. Thanks to Tutor.com, everyone at BSD can engage in tutoring at no extra charge to their families.

“This has definitely helped solve an equity issue for our district,” said Fournier. **“Tutor.com has leveled the playing field.”**

Scaling academic opportunity is especially important in a world where the cost of education goes up every year, and where finding and keeping good teachers can be challenging and expensive. “This is yet another way for districts to reduce their overall operating costs,” said Fournier. “Tutor.com is saving the district and/or parents significant funds that would otherwise have to be paid out to private tutors.”

Finally, Tutor.com gives BSD an easy answer to the question, “How can I help my child be more successful in school?” and without any additional financial burden. “The school district can’t recommend that someone get a tutor because if we did, we’d be saying that we were going to pay for it,” Fournier said. “However, **we can and do recommend Tutor.com.**”





Instant Access to a Valuable Platform

As a starting point, BSD initially rolled out the new tutoring platform to its leadership team. Fournier wanted that team to understand Tutor.com's purpose and value first. Next, he rolled it out to all of the parents, many of whom got their first look at the platform via a dedicated website where families can get their tutoring-related questions answered. Tutor.com is integrated with Google Classroom, so students can get instant access to the platform through a single sign-on.

Fournier really liked the ease of implementing Tutor.com, which didn't require an "all hands on deck" approach. Instead, the tool was put in place, and everyone was given access to it. Some parents jumped onboard quickly, while others took a wait-and-see approach. "The idea was to just put it out there and let people use it," said Fournier. "This allows us to just meet all students and families where they're at."

Participation has been impressive so far. **In the last six months, BSD students completed more than 1,000 sessions.** Most were tutoring sessions across a wide range of subject areas; many were drop-off writing review sessions. Students also utilized the program's self-paced resources, including test prep from The Princeton Review®.

Guiding Students Through the Learning Process

Instead of giving students the answers, Tutor.com’s tutors ask Socratic questions and guide learners through the problem-solving process. Educators also receive early intervention alerts about students who may be struggling with content mastery or prerequisite knowledge so that schools can provide just-in-time support or address curricular challenges.

For example, if a student is working on an algebra problem and struggling with multiplication facts, an alert can provide real-time insights for educators. **“Those alerts are really helpful because we can feed that information back to the teacher,”** said Fournier. **“I find that to be a very powerful tool to help students advance.”**

District administrators and teachers also receive monthly usage reports that help them “drill down” to specific students, view their progress, and take any necessary action. Going forward, Fournier expects that increasing numbers of students and families will continue to take advantage of the tutoring platform, which often sends him reflecting back to his days of serving as parent-tutor for his own children.

“My hope is for wider use among the student population and families who are at the dining room table doing homework with their kids. They’ll run into a math or science problem that they can’t tackle and say, ‘Hey, let’s try Tutor.com,’” said Fournier. “We’d like it to become one of their go-to resources for help.”

