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New National Effort Seeks to Develop and Scale High-Impact Tutoring Models to Boost Academic Achievement for All Students

\$65 Million Raised Toward a Goal of \$100 Million

Known as Accelerate, Initiative to Be Led by Former Tennessee Commissioner of Education

Call to Effective Action Issued to Recruit Partners to Join National Community of Practice, and Build Evidence Base for Cost-Effective, Sustainable Learning Solutions

April 5, 2022 — As school districts grapple with a widespread loss of learning time caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—and as they struggle with how best to spend an infusion of one-time federal funds to address it—a group of education leaders, philanthropists, researchers, and local leaders today announced the launch of [Accelerate](#), a nonprofit organization that seeks to embed high-impact tutoring programs in public schools now and for the long term.

Accelerate will fund and support innovation in schools, launch high quality research, and build a federal and state policy agenda to support this work.

With achievement gaps particularly profound among historically underserved students and with research showing that high-impact tutoring can produce sizable gains, Accelerate today issued a [Call to Effective Action](#) to recruit state education agencies, school districts, and tutoring providers, among others, to join the national effort. Those selected to participate will receive financial and operational support to design, implement, and scale tutoring strategies; join a national community in which they can

share best practices and resources; and ultimately help inform Accelerate's national research and policy agenda.

Incubated and launched by the nonprofit organization [America Achieves](#), Accelerate will be led by Kevin Huffman, the former Tennessee commissioner of education, who will be the initiative's chief executive officer. Dr. Janice K. Jackson, the chief executive officer of Hope Chicago (and former chief executive officer of the Chicago Public Schools), will serve as executive chair. Founding board members are Jackson; Dr. Susanna Loeb, the director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the [National Student Support Accelerator](#) at Brown University; and Jon Schnur, the chief executive officer of America Achieves.

To date, America Achieves has raised \$65 million for Accelerate toward a target of \$100 million by next year. The initial support is being provided by [Arnold Ventures](#); [Kenneth C. Griffin](#), the chief executive officer of Citadel, who provided the first funding for the initiative; [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#); and [Overdeck Family Foundation](#).

The lead research partners in Accelerate include the [Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University](#) and [the University of Chicago](#).

Dr. Miguel Cardona, the U.S. Secretary of Education, said, "The evidence is clear: high-impact tutoring works, and I've urged our nation's schools to provide every student who is struggling with extended access to an effective tutor."

"The effort announced today—Accelerate—is a rallying cry to schools, districts, states, and others," Cardona continued. "We must seize this moment to use federal relief funds to help students, including those most impacted by the pandemic, to close gaps in opportunity and achievement that grew even wider over the last two years. Together, we can ensure our elementary and secondary school students receive the supports they need to learn and grow."

(See below for quotes from five former U.S. Secretaries of Education.)

Huffman, the Accelerate CEO, said: "States and districts are trying to address massive gaps in student outcomes, and they need stronger tools and better policies to help kids catch up. We know that high-impact tutoring can close academic gaps, but we need to develop cost-effective models that can be scaled and implemented in the years ahead. Education leaders are anxious for tools with a strong evidence base, and we are striving to build a research base and a practical toolkit that will help schools across the country."

Said Jackson: “Long-term, we want all students—and particularly the students with the greatest needs—to have free and regular access to high-impact tutoring and individualized learning. Our schools worked hard to narrow achievement gaps before the pandemic, but those gaps have now widened and must be addressed. We believe in the potential of all children, and we think it is our responsibility as adults working with public schools to provide tools that help them achieve their goals.”

Tutoring is generally defined as a form of teaching, one-on-one or in a small group, toward a specific goal. The National Student Support Accelerator, an initiative of the Annenberg Institute, defines high-impact tutoring programs as having “demonstrated significant gains in student learning through state-of-the-art research studies” or other “characteristics that have proven to accelerate student learning.” Among those characteristics: “substantial time” each week for required tutoring; “sustained and strong relationships” between student and tutor; “close monitoring” of student knowledge; alignment with school curriculum; and oversight of tutors to ensure “quality interactions.”

The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in American education, widening racial and economic gaps in learning. The nonprofit research organization NWEA, for example, has [documented](#) the toll of the first year of the pandemic on children, noting lower-than-normal math and reading levels for third through eighth graders this past fall.

At the same time, school districts are struggling with how best to spend billions in once-in-a-generation federal relief funding to accelerate student learning, as well as how to build models that are cost-effective and can be sustained once the federal funding runs out. School districts have already designated more than \$1.7 billion in one-time funding for tutoring and coaching, a sum that is projected to grow to \$3.6 billion by the time federal COVID relief aid to education expires in 2024, according to [FutureEd](#), an independent think tank at Georgetown University’s McCourt School of Public Policy. And 37 state education agencies have pledged to support tutoring with their share of federal relief monies, as demonstrated by [a state-by-state analysis](#) that also includes planned levels of funding.

In his [State of the Union address](#) in February, President Joe Biden urged Americans to “sign up to be a tutor or a mentor” in their local schools to “help students make up for lost learning.”

To learn more about Accelerate and the importance of high-impact tutoring, [register to join a webinar](#) featuring Sec. Cardona today at 2 p.m. ET and/or visit [accelerate.us](#).

Quotes about Accelerate

“This ambitious, timely project is meeting the moment in K-12 education. The effort brings together academic researchers, education officials, policymakers, and service providers to expand access to high-quality tutoring services and to coordinate and support research. It also builds and disseminates rigorous evidence on which interventions, strategies, and policies help improve academic achievement for students.” – **Laura and John Arnold, Founders and Co-Chairs, Arnold Ventures**

“We need to accelerate learning for the millions of students who have fallen behind during the pandemic. I care deeply about addressing this urgent recovery challenge and helping America's students realize their true potential. I am thankful so many people are committed to this undertaking, which is important for the future of our country.” – **Ken Griffin, Founder and CEO, Citadel**

“After the COVID-19 pandemic, high-impact tutoring offers students critical educational support, closing gaps in foundational learning. We remain committed to ensuring tutoring interventions are cost-effective, so they can be scalable and sustainable in order to have meaningful long-term impact.” – **John Overdeck, President, Overdeck Family Foundation**

“We have decades of research showing that high-impact tutoring can help students recover from the unfinished learning they experienced—especially our most vulnerable and underserved children and young people. Accelerate will help school systems, states, and non-profits take action—equipped with funding, support, technical assistance, and partnership with a community of best practice. I encourage school districts, states, and nonprofits to respond to Accelerate’s Call to Effective Action.” – **John B. King Jr., Former U.S. Secretary of Education**

“I am excited to see a highly successful, student-centered superintendent and state commissioner come together to lead this work. Janice Jackson led significant academic innovations in Chicago and brings two decades of experience working successfully with high-need students. Kevin Huffman led the largest state academic gains in the country, working with both rural and urban districts. Their leadership will be critical to the initiative.” – **Arne Duncan, Former U.S. Secretary of Education**

“While every schoolhouse in the nation was upended by COVID-19, students who have long been marginalized by virtue of their race or income have been hit the hardest. Accelerate will serve as a clearinghouse of evidence-based practices for how tutoring and other interventions can close gaps in achievement and equity—and do so in close coordination with public school teachers and school

administrators. This initiative will provide a roadmap and support to local, regional, and state education leaders seeking to advance student outcomes in the near term and long term.” – **Margaret Spellings, Former U.S. Secretary of Education**

“As we work together to help students and families regain lost ground academically, we have to make sure that we are spending our time and public resources on strategies that work. I am excited about the potential of Accelerate to discern and scale evidence-based practices that help students learn more while pushing for policies that help ensure all students have access to quality learning.”
– **Rod Paige, Former U.S. Secretary of Education**

“To improve education for all, everyone has a role to play—including parents, teachers, students, and tutors from a wide variety of backgrounds. When tutoring is done right, it can be a game-changer for children and young people. That’s particularly true for students who were already lagging before the pandemic disrupted our nation’s classrooms—and who suffered the most from significant instructional loss over the past two years. Quality tutoring takes place one on one or in very small groups, takes place multiple times weekly, and is aligned with a challenging curriculum being taught in class. Accelerate will help states, school districts, and nonprofit organizations offer high-quality tutoring to benefit students right now who need the help—and help lay a foundation for long-term success for all of America’s children. This important effort will provide funding, know-how, and other support as these groups design effective tutoring strategies and aim to make effective use of one-time federal funding.” – **Richard Riley, Former U.S. Secretary of Education**

"This new organization fills a great need, not only, in the moment, to expand high-impact tutoring—the most promising approach that we’ve seen in research to address pandemic-related learning needs—but also to make sure, through funding research and advocating for policy change, that we can sustain and improve high-impact tutoring so that all students have access to a skilled and caring adult who knows them and helps them thrive." – **Dr. Susanna Loeb, Director, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the National Student Support Accelerator at Brown University**

“In an increasingly globalized economy, our country and our communities can’t be competitive and sustainable without leveraging the talent of our young people from every background — including the one in two public school students in the U.S. who are low-income and the nearly 50 percent who are people of color. High-impact tutoring is one of the few practices proven to help students

substantially accelerate their learning in the near-term - and lay the foundation for their long-term contributions to our communities. We are pleased at America Achieves to incubate and launch Accelerate in order to help educators, tutors, students, communities, and parents make these evidence-based practices happen across the country.” – **Jon Schnur, CEO, America Achieves**