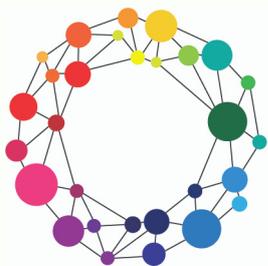
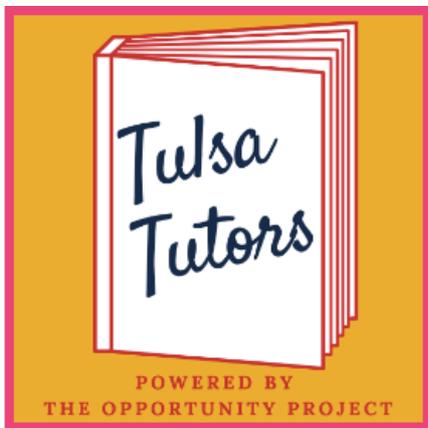


Summer 2020

# Tulsa Tutors Report



THE OPPORTUNITY  
PROJECT

Connecting Youth to the World of Opportunity

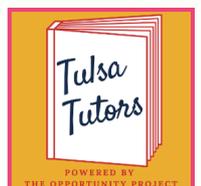
# Project Snapshot

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, The Opportunity Project established the Tulsa Tutors program to facilitate the maintenance and growth of academic skills for a cohort of Tulsa elementary school students. The Opportunity Project partnered with the YMCA Hutcherson branch to provide tutoring services for 57 elementary campers in the summer 2020 session.

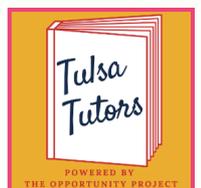
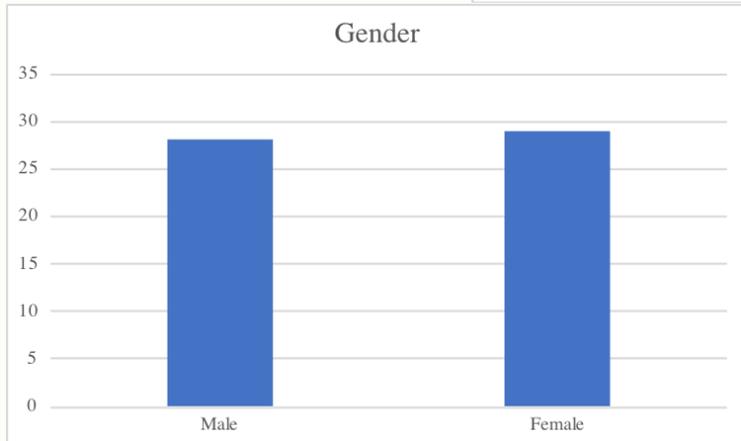
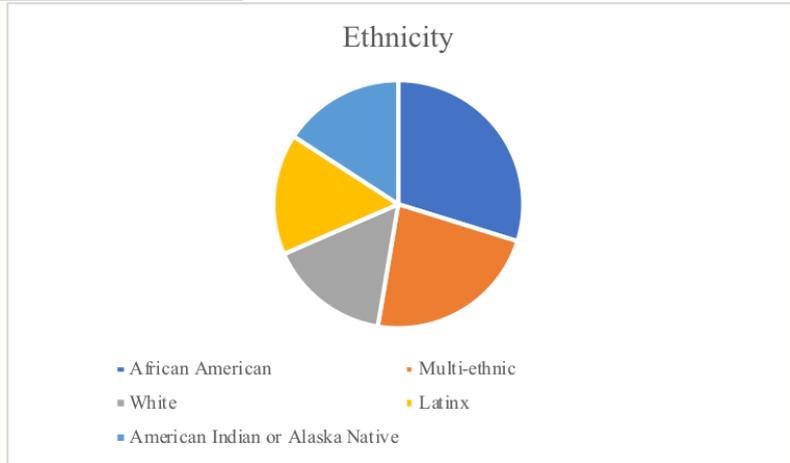
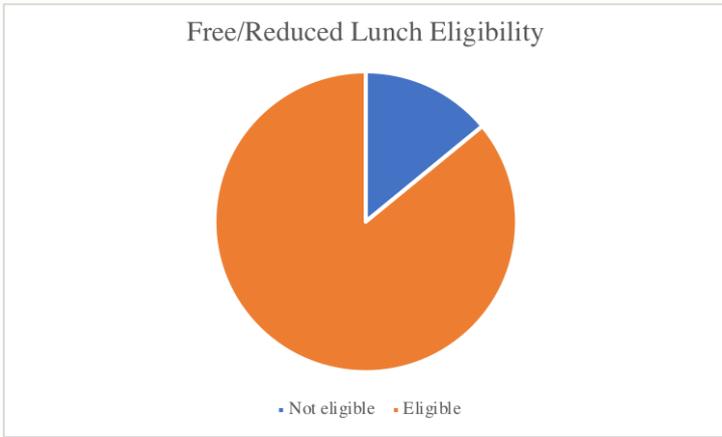
## The Backstory

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Tulsa Public Schools transitioned to virtual learning in March for the duration of the school year. Last year, the Tulsa Public Schools Data Strategy and Analytics Team found that students lost an average of 40% of their school-year gains over the summer. Three months of virtual learning compounded with the prevalence of summer academic losses posed a threat to student achievement and opportunity.

As a result, The Opportunity Project saw a clear need for summer academic enrichment and established the Tulsa Tutors program. In response to the urgent academic needs of students, The Opportunity Project partnered with the YMCA Hutcherson branch to provide in-person tutoring intervention. The YMCA operates a free camp at the Hutcherson branch for any Tulsa Y GO Club participants. The summer camp combines traditional summer activities, physical movement, and a tutoring block. The Opportunity Project sponsored Tulsa Tutors to team with the current day camp counselors already on-site.



Of the 57 students served by Tulsa Tutors, 86% qualified for free or reduced lunch. Tulsa Tutors participants were 30% African American, 23% Multi-ethnic, 16% White, 16% Latinx, and 16% American Indian or Alaska Native. Tulsa Tutors served 29 girls and 28 boys over the course of four weeks of tutoring sessions. The cohort included nine English Language Learners (ELLs) and seven Special Education students.

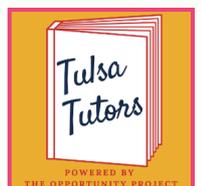


# The Approach

Tulsa Tutors provided in-person tutoring to elementary students entering kindergarten through 6th grade this fall, helping them get ahead or catch up on content they may have missed due to lost time in the classroom this past spring. In small groups of three campers paired with one tutor, tutors alternated between weeks of literacy/English Language Arts (ELA) work and numeracy/math supports, scaffolded for appropriate age and developmental stage.

The tutors operating the Tulsa Tutors program were required to pass a background check, received online training via The Opp Online, and completed a self-paced YMCA on-boarding as well as two 90-minute orientation sessions. The Tulsa Tutors program operated from June 22nd through July 23rd, with each camper receiving 40 minutes of small-group tutoring each weekday.

Campers were split into two groups – lower elementary students (Kindergarten through 3rd grade) and upper elementary students (4th grade through 6th grade). As a result, tutors could group students based on their academic needs and differentiate rigorous and engaging content to meet individual student needs. For literacy tutoring, Tulsa Tutors used Readworks, a free resource for parents, teachers, and students to access quality and research-based ELA curriculum. ReadWorks passages are paired with vocabulary and comprehension questions aligned with Lexile level and Common Core Standards. Each week, students were exposed to two new ReadWorks texts, one narrative fiction and one nonfiction. All ReadWorks passages were paired with vocabulary and comprehension questions to engage students.



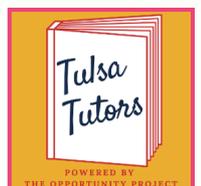
For lower elementary literacy tutoring, Tulsa Tutors used ReadWorks passages to enact a curriculum that consisted of sight words, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. For upper elementary students, the literacy tutoring curriculum focused on vocabulary and in-depth comprehension of the text.

Tulsa Tutors math tutoring centered on numeracy work. The math curriculum covered a wide range of elementary math skills, including counting, addition, subtraction, fractions, units of measurement, and graphing. Furthermore, Tulsa Tutors prioritized the importance of social and emotional (SEL) learning during its time with students by including a warm welcome and optimistic closure in all tutoring sessions.

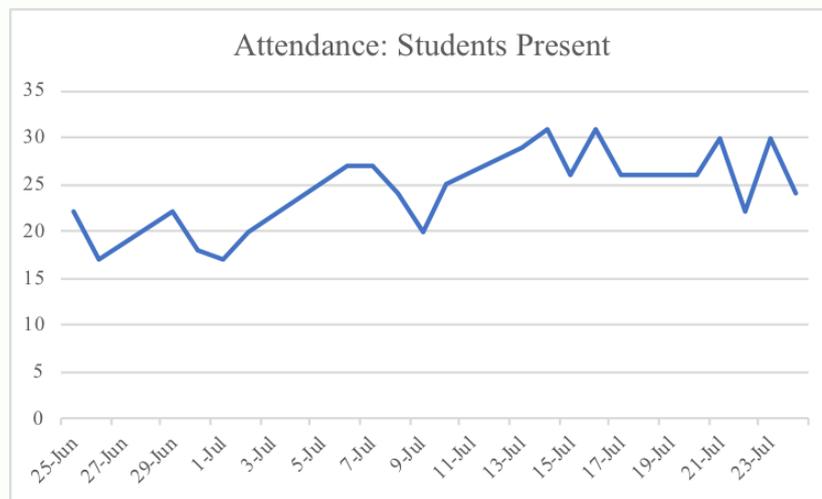
## Key Findings

Tulsa Tutors observed significant growth during its four weeks of programming. Students were engaged daily in interactive lessons and activities, avoiding a summer lull in academic enrichment. Tutors reported astounding growth for students, both in reading and math skills. In one noteworthy anecdote, a tutor recalled a student who began the program unable to identify individual letters developing the skills to read entire words as a result of tutoring lessons. Another tutor reflected, "The point of the camp was to supplement curriculum lost, but we saw a lot of learning and growth."

Tutors reported increased engagement with activities involving creativity and physical movement. For example, science projects and games involving physical movement gained high levels of student engagement. Tutors also found that competitive games were beneficial to student engagement, stating, "The kids were highly motivated by competition; it made them want to learn!" As a result, tutors incorporated movement into reading and math tutoring activities to increase student engagement.



In terms of attendance analysis, the number of camper participants was relatively consistent. Tulsa Tutors worked with an average of 24 elementary campers each day. However, over the course of the four weeks, there was irregular attendance and a high turnover rate among individual students. Tutors worked with 57 students over the course of the summer, tutoring roughly half of those students each day. This pattern could be attributed to a number of factors beyond the scope of Tulsa Tutors intervention, but is worth noting as a potential impact on student growth.



With regards to social and emotional learning (SEL) growth, tutors reported an increase in students' self-regulated behavior that could be attributed to the emphasis on understanding emotions. Daily SEL practices included warm welcomes, Mood Meter check-ins, brain breaks, and optimistic closures. Another SEL tool Tulsa Tutors implemented was the creation of group charters, essentially group agreements of how students wanted to feel during their time together. These group charters helped to establish expectations and mutual respect for others' feelings and their community as a group. By consistently implementing SEL practices, trust was formed between the tutors and the campers in their cohort, ultimately facilitating a positive academic environment that emphasized the joy of learning. Tutors agreed that, "Students seemed happy in the camp," indicating the healthy emotional environment created through the daily use of SEL tools.

Overall, Tulsa Tutors demonstrates the importance of academic enrichment when students are unable to be in a physical classroom at school. With small group individualized instruction, tutors were able to facilitate meaningful, engaging lessons for students. Tulsa Tutors prioritized academic growth, while maintaining the ideal that learning should be fun and exciting. As a result, tutors helped numerous students grow from being "afraid of numbers" to asking "are we doing math again tomorrow?!" Despite obstacles, Tulsa Tutors ultimately produced tangible results in academic growth for students.

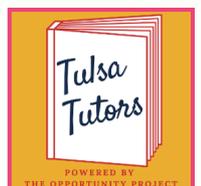
# Recommendations

## 1. Prior Access to Student Information

The Tulsa Tutors program was created in response to the Covid-19 crisis, leaving The Opportunity Project little time to prepare. Due to YMCA privacy concerns, The Opportunity Project was unable to access important student information, such as grade level, academic level, and IEP and 504 plan interventions. As a result, tutors reported difficulty providing developmentally appropriate and rigorous curriculum, particularly with regards to ELA/reading material. In future programming, knowledge of student grade level, academic level, and general information is imperative to effectively grouping students and differentiating to provide developmentally appropriate curriculum.

## 2. Continuation of Small Group Setting

Tulsa Tutors found the small group, individualized structure to be highly effective to young learners. In this small group setting, tutors were able to adapt lessons for each group to meet the needs of each individual student. General consensus among tutors was the positive impact of the small group setting, reflecting, "Smaller groups of students and one-on-one tutoring are best for student learning and social and emotional development." The small group structure of Tulsa Tutors allowed for each student to receive a personalized learning experience, benefitting both academic and SEL progress.



### **3. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Emphasis**

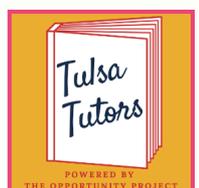
The implementation of SEL tools enriched the experience of the students in the Tulsa Tutors program. Daily SEL practices, including a warm welcome and optimistic closure, aided students in developing self-regulation skills, managing their emotions, setting goals, and feeling empathy towards their fellow students. The positive environment grounded in SEL practices fostered greater student academic growth and increased empathy led to students supporting and teaching one another during tutoring sessions. Tutors reported SEL tools to be a fundamental success of the Tulsa Tutors program.

### **4. Consistent Attendance**

According to attendance data, of the 57 campers served by Tulsa Tutors, an average of 24 were tutored each day of the program. Since Tulsa Tutors was operating within the YMCA's GO Club camp, student attendance was at the daily discretion of parents and life circumstances. Some students only attended the camp for a week or two, limiting their exposure to Tulsa Tutors. Though camper attendance was beyond the realm of control of Tulsa Tutors, more consistent attendance would benefit the overall efficacy of the program by ensuring each student receives the full, consistent curriculum.

### **5. Data: Pre-test/post-test**

In a future model similar to Tulsa Tutors, it would be advantageous to supply more robust learning goals to track data. Due to the urgent need for action, Tulsa Tutors was unable to retrieve students school records, rendering the program unable to identify a pre-test that could be used for all students. Though qualitative data demonstrated the successes of Tulsa Tutors, student academic growth could not be measured quantitatively without an effective pre-test. Future programs may consider the benefits of utilizing a pre-test and post-test to track student academic data and growth.



# Next Steps

As The Opportunity Project and other third-party organizations continue to respond to the academic needs of students during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Tulsa Tutors provides a framework of effective methods as well as potential improvements for future programming. As a pilot program, the implications of Tulsa Tutors create useful guidelines for tutoring programs or distance learning programs. Looking ahead to the 2020-2021 school year, it is imperative that student academic growth as well as social and emotional learning is fostered despite the challenges that accompany distance learning.

