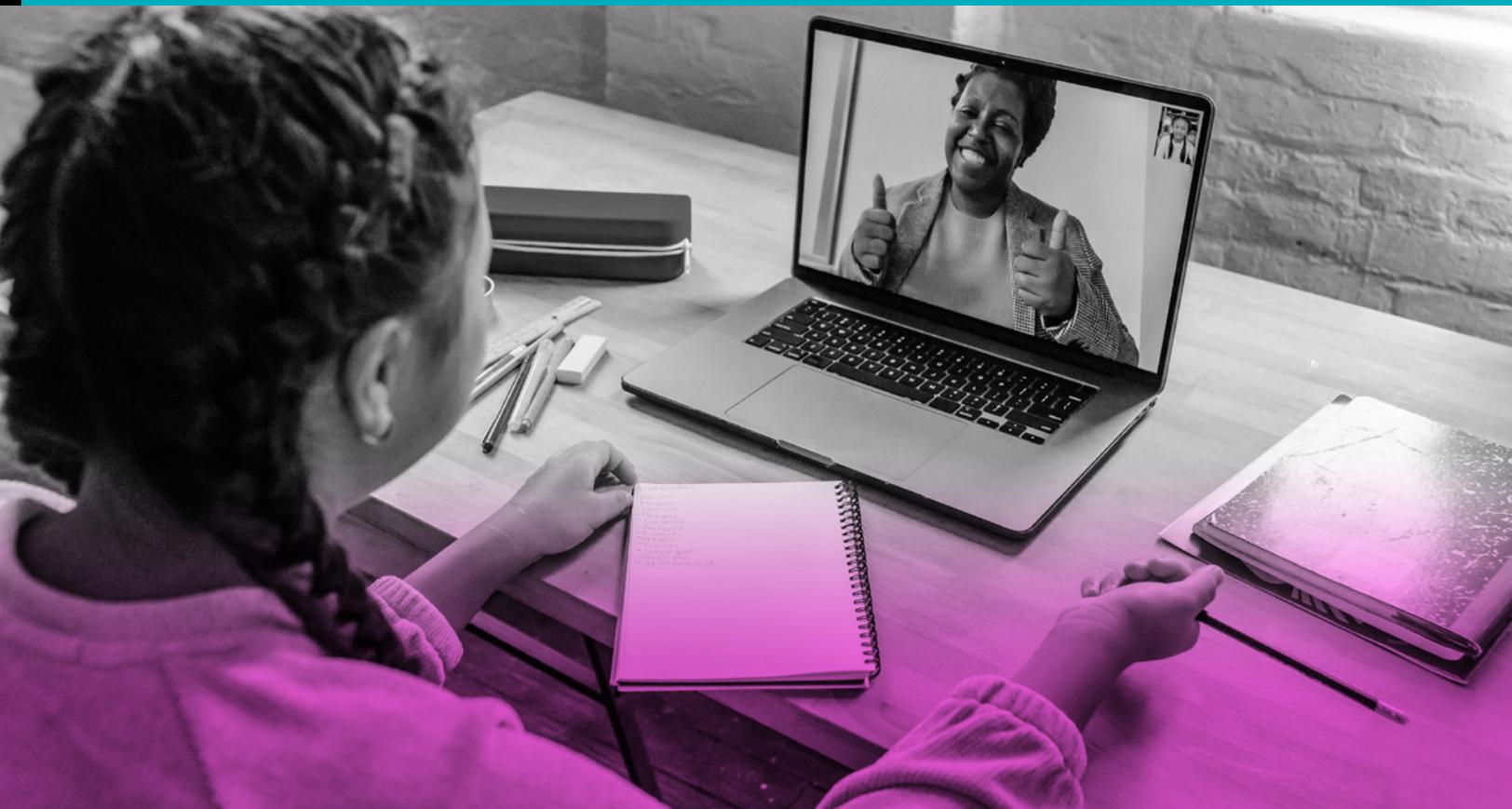




# Tutoring in the Age of COVID-19

A Case Study of the Study Buddy Program



# Partners



The Diversity Institute conducts and co-ordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes, and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by equity-deserving groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results.



The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policy makers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills program.

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced communities across Canada to go into lockdown, students had to transition from a face-to-face learning strategy to an online mode almost overnight, disrupting their natural flow of learning. Along with economic and emotional stress, many parents struggled to access the resources needed to support their children's remote education. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded inequities in our society by restricting many parents with lower wages or those unable to work due to a lack of alternative child care support. Another group negatively affected by pandemic-related school closures were the teacher-candidate students unable to complete the volunteer hours required for their degree.

As a solution to these problems, the Diversity Institute at the Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University launched the Study Buddy program—a free online tutoring program with Faculty of Education student tutors to support Black, racialized and newcomer children and families— in May 2020. The program was designed to address some of the challenges created by the pandemic

(e.g., navigating homeschooling and coping with other stressors) and to provide work-integrated learning opportunities for post-secondary students, newcomers and Faculty of Education students. The Study Buddy program aligns with the collective work agreement addressing the Ontario Ministry of Education Directives 19, 24 and 25. This work supports high-priority schools in the district with additional resources to address the four pillars of the School Improvement Equity Planning process: Relationships; Student Learning and Well-Being; Leadership and Capacity Building; and Accountability, with a focus on Black, Indigenous and historically marginalized students.

## Study Buddy program design

The Study Buddy program linked families, school-aged children and teacher candidates to provide a low-cost, mutually beneficial solution. Teacher candidates requiring placements could help students with their online schoolwork through one-on-one tutoring. The program removed this burden from families, allowing parents to focus on their entrepreneurial and work activities and helped reduce the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



## By the numbers



Engaged **684 students**  
from **451 families**



Participants living in rural  
and remote **northern**  
**parts of Canada**



Provided services to  
**302 students**  
from **247 families**



**331 trained tutors** who  
are teaching candidates  
from five Ontario post-  
secondary institutions



A vast majority of the  
participants represent  
**racialized groups,**  
**newcomers, persons**  
**with disabilities,**  
**Indigenous Peoples,**  
**2SLGBTQ+ people**



**8,600 hours**  
of tutoring



more than  
**12,800 sessions**

The main objectives of the Study Buddy program include:

- > Skills development among children and youth, with a focus on Black, Indigenous, racialized and immigrant populations
- > Skills development among post-secondary students (tutors)
- > Skills and capacity development among families

## Study Buddy program evaluation and impact on key stakeholders

To understand the impact of the Study Buddy program on K–12 students, their families and tutors who are teacher candidates, the Diversity Institute administered two surveys—a pre-program registration survey and post-program satisfaction survey—to four cohorts of

parents and tutors from September 2020 to December 2021. Additionally, we used user or log data from the digital platform on which the online tutoring services were delivered. We conducted descriptive and bivariate analyses using the registration and satisfaction survey data gathered from families and tutors and a thematic analysis with the feedback gathered from families through open-ended questions.

Since its inception, parents, students and tutors have found the Study Buddy program to be fulfilling and a positive influence. Based on analysis of the two sets of surveys, we found the following significant impacts.

### **Impact on parents**

During the pandemic, parents were tasked with handling the care and education of their children while schools were closed, which many found stressful. This stressor was exacerbated by the pressure of increased financial difficulties and job loss caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, parents who were able to work from home had to balance child care with fulfilling their work obligations. By participating in the Study Buddy program, parents were able to transfer the duty of education to a qualified third party; as a result, they experienced:

- > Reduced overall stress
- > Reduced anxiety
- > Increased hope for the future.

### **Impact on students**

For many students, the COVID-19 pandemic was a major interruption to their education and negatively affected their ability to learn. When schools were closed during lockdown, students from low socioeconomic status homes lost access to learning resources, placing their education at risk. Students' social learning, which often manifests through daily interactions with friends and authority figures, also suffered. Through the Study Buddy Program, we were able to replicate this experience and provide students with:

- > Access to quality educational resources
- > Positive social experiences
- > Opportunities to further education.

### **Impact on tutors**

Because schools were closed during the lockdown, many aspiring teachers were unable to complete their mandatory teacher training using the traditional student-teacher positions in schools. Instead, they dedicated their time to the Study Buddy program and used their newly acquired teaching skills to help equity-deserving families access crucial educational resources. Throughout the past two years, tutors noticed many positive benefits to their participation in the Study Buddy program, including:

- > Enhanced skills
- > Career-appropriate training
- > Experience adapting to challenges.



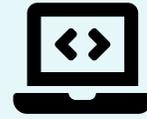
## Conclusions and recommendations

In Canada, education is one of the strongest drivers of social mobility; however, internationally and within Canada, persistent gaps remain in academic achievement, contributing to unequal outcomes in employment, health and belonging. We are only now coming to understand the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning and evidence of its disproportionate effect on equity-deserving communities. The analysis from the data gathered over the last two years of the Study Buddy program suggests a positive impact not just on students from equity-deserving families, but also on their parents and tutors.

Based on this, several recommendations have been formulated:

- > **Recognize the importance of tutoring as an intervention to support student learning** and explore how different models (e.g., face-to-face, online, individual, group, school-based, community-based and a combination of these) can meet the needs of different learners.
- > **Ensure an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) lens is applied to the development of tutoring programs.** For example, understanding that barriers to tutoring may include not only knowledge and resources (time and money), but also trust and engagement with traditional systems of learning and their administration.
- > **Explore the broader effects of student supports on families and communities.** The motivation for the Study Buddy program came largely from parents in the Black community who were directly affected by the pandemic and worried about their ability to support their children, rather than from educators.

- > **Explore the benefits of tutor training and opportunities** as part of the development of teachers and skills development. For example, Study Buddy supported skills development among student teachers and subsequently developed tutor training programs for high school students to enable them to earn money and develop skills tutoring younger students.
- > **Ensure tutoring programs include mandatory training** not just in pedagogy but also in EDI, anti-Black racism, Truth and Reconciliation, and strategies to create inclusive learning environments.
- > **Recognize the opportunities created by digitization** and new technologies such as adaptive learning to enhance tutoring while recognizing the challenges of the digital divide. Many of those most in need of support are least likely to have access to the devices, networks and skills required.
- > **Always consider the importance of wraparound supports**, including access to technology, mental health support, counselling and other forms of assistance for students and their families.
- > **Understand that the foundation of Canada’s social and economic well-being rests on education**, and success in K–12 sets the foundation for future education and skills. Work to advance EDI must begin upstream.
- > **Continue to develop robust, inclusive and accessible models of tutoring** and to assess what works for whom using disaggregated data.



*Study Buddy **supported skills development among student teachers** and subsequently developed tutor training programs for high school students to **enable them to earn money and develop skills** tutoring younger students.*



# Introduction

## Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects globally. In Canada, the pandemic disproportionately affected equity-deserving groups (women, racialized groups, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and immigrants), resulting in the exacerbation of existing inequalities. Studies have shown the negative impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on members of equity-deserving groups, resulting in poorer economic,<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup> physical<sup>5</sup> and mental health outcomes.<sup>6, 7</sup> The pandemic exacerbated inequities not only on the health (especially mental health) of racialized students, but also on their educational, social and recreational lives.<sup>8</sup> Another group that was affected were teacher candidates who could no longer go into schools to acquire their practicum hours and were forced to move into the digital space. This was an opportunity to address the gap in learning outcome and well-being for students from equity-deserving communities<sup>9</sup> through online tutoring while also helping teacher candidates meet their mandatory practicum hours to graduate.

This report explores how Study Buddy, an individualized tutoring program, contributed to the well-being of equity-deserving children and their families amid the educational disruption caused by the pandemic. It also examines the impact of such interventions on the future generation of teacher candidates.

It presents the extant literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equity-deserving families; how pre-existing structural inequities were aggravated during the pandemic; and the pandemic's effect on access to education among these communities. It explores how tutoring programs emerged as an opportunity to address the learning outcomes and the theoretical foundations for the development of the Study Buddy program. We briefly provide the history of the program and the process involved to set up a community-school-university collaboration. In the findings section, we examine the data gathered to understand the impact of the program on students, families and teacher candidates.

## Program objectives

Study Buddy addressed the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on three groups. It provided school-aged children (K-12) with additional tutoring to meet the needs of remote online learning. Parents, particularly from marginalized communities, benefited by receiving support during a challenging time. By providing tutoring services, teacher candidates could complete the volunteer hours to fulfil graduation requirements.

The Study Buddy program aimed to address disparities of access and opportunity for historically underserved students—with a focus on Black and Indigenous children and youth—mitigate the impacts of pandemic-related educational disparities through tutoring services, and augment the individual and shared support models available to students and families in high-priority school settings. In addition, the program aimed to improve the educational experience for marginalized students and support the pathway to successful graduation. Objectives of the Study Buddy program are as follows:

- > Skills development among children and youth, with a focus on Black, Indigenous, racialized and immigrant populations
- > Skills development among post-secondary students (tutors)
- > Skills and capacity development among families
- > Support for teachers and administrators.

## Objectives of the Study Buddy program



Skills development among children and youth, with a focus on Black, Indigenous, racialized and immigrant populations

Skills development among post-secondary students (tutors)



Support for teachers and administrators

Skills and capacity development among families



## Disruption of student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

When the spread of COVID-19 required communities across Canada to go into lockdown, students were forced to transition from a familiar, face-to-face learning strategy into a new, online, emergency-response teaching environment. Parents, also facing unprecedented economic and emotional stress, were required to support the transition to online learning for their children. However, this challenge disproportionately fell to women and often negatively affected work and entrepreneurial activities. Not all families had access to the resources for this activity. In contrast,



financially stable families with higher incomes prior to the pandemic were more likely to be able to continue to work remotely during the lockdown. They also tended to have the resources to provide tools and external support for online learning for their children.

In this way, the COVID-19 pandemic compounded the inequities in our society. People who were already marginalized by lower wages, working in essential services or unable to work outside the home while also caring for their children, and women, were the least able to ensure continuity in education and balance work and entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, some newcomers to Canada may have lacked the language capacity to support online learning for their children. We know that supporting youth in attaining better academic outcomes can facilitate social mobility. To ensure this, the families most affected by the pandemic needed additional resources that wealthier families can provide on their own. Another group significantly affected by the pandemic is post-secondary students. In particular, teacher candidates were unable to complete the volunteer hours required for their degree.

### Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equity-deserving families

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families from equity-deserving populations has been severe, with these groups being more likely to work in sectors most affected by the pandemic, hold precarious or lower-paying jobs, or have experienced job loss or loss of hours.<sup>10, 11, 12</sup> This resulted in a more severe impact on the financial security of racialized groups compared to their white counterparts, although both groups experienced similar increases in job loss and loss of hours.<sup>13</sup> A significant proportion of Black and other racialized groups were precariously employed as essential and frontline workers, forcing them to work during the pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Newcomers and Canadian-born individuals indicated different experiences with the negative impacts of the pandemic on their lives: 34% of newcomers versus 24% of Canadian-born individuals reported being significantly or moderately affected by challenges posed by the pandemic. Similar differences were observed between Canadian-born women and newcomer women, with 31%



***Canadian-born individuals were less likely than newcomers to anticipate losing their jobs or see their businesses go under during the pandemic.***

of newcomer women reporting major or moderate impacts versus 24% of Canadian-born women. Canadian-born individuals were less likely than newcomers to anticipate losing their jobs or see their businesses go under during the pandemic.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the challenges of unemployment and the rapid transition to remote work, families from equity-deserving groups were challenged by the convergence of multiple stresses, compounded by school and daycare closures, the burden of unpaid work in the home and unequal access to basic infrastructure supports. School closures caused significant disruptions for parents as they struggled to cope with the demands of child care and supporting their child's educational needs while juggling employment and financial instability.<sup>16</sup> Studies show that parents of children from equity-deserving groups were more concerned about being able to maintain their households financially, and they were less likely to be able to provide the time, capacity and resources such as affordable Internet access and study space that would give their children the foundation

for success during online learning.<sup>17</sup> These parents were often employed in sectors without flexible work arrangements and worried about their children falling behind because they were not available to manage homeschooling.<sup>18</sup>

School and daycare closures during the pandemic especially affected working mothers. One in three Canadian women considered quitting their job during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to 19% of men.<sup>19</sup> One commonly cited reason was to spend more time helping their children with schoolwork. A study looking at parents' mental health and well-being during the pandemic found that one-third of parents reported moderate to high levels of anxiety, while close to 60% said they had symptoms that met the criteria for depression.<sup>20</sup> Almost 50% of parents reported having trouble managing their child's remote learning, as well as anxiety and depression during the pandemic.<sup>21</sup> Access to extracurricular support was viewed as especially important to realizing good mental health and emotional well-being for equity-deserving communities.<sup>22</sup>

The uneven approaches to supporting remote students adopted during school closures increased the burden on families. Even though the Ontario provincial government said that parents were not expected to take over teaching, many of the approaches to remote learning for students required the involvement of parents, which was crucial to success in online learning.<sup>23</sup> For many families, it was not possible for parents to motivate, engage and monitor the schoolwork and learning for their children



because of a lack of time, insufficient digital skills or a lack of curricular guidelines.<sup>24, 25</sup> Parents who were new to the language of instruction at school may have been unable to access the materials and communications that were sent home.<sup>26, 27</sup> Moreover, fewer parents from equity-deserving populations had access to “pandemic learning pods” to support their children in online learning, and they were less likely to seek tutoring support due to the high costs of private tutoring.<sup>28, 29</sup> Some parents may have been unaware of free tutoring programs that were offered; on the other hand, many of the tutoring services that were offered at low or no cost took place in group settings as opposed to one-on-one tutoring, making them less effective.<sup>30</sup>

### **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to education**

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted education and schooling in Ontario.<sup>31</sup> Apart from physical distancing and other public health measures implemented, the pandemic led to mass and localized school closures in Canada, affecting 5.7 million children attending elementary and secondary school.<sup>32</sup> Previous studies during the H1N1 outbreak in 2009 have examined the short-term effects of school closures on curtailing the spread of the virus and the effects on families’ economic and social status, including loss of jobs and alternative child care arrangements.<sup>33, 34</sup> While there are substantial gaps in the data on the impact of COVID-19-related school closures on children, emerging research has demonstrated that the unequal distribution of school closures and hardships associated

with the pandemic have deepened and accelerated inequities in education outcomes.<sup>35</sup>

The first challenge with school closure is that many households face barriers to accessing the internet and tools that students need to learn online. Across Canada, about three in five households with school-aged children experienced the shift to online learning during the autumn of 2020.<sup>36</sup> While many households were concerned about the cost of connectivity, about three in 10 reported that their children would have to use public Wi-Fi to finish their schoolwork due to lack of reliable internet connection at home; would not be able to complete their schoolwork because they did not have access to a computer at home; or would have to do their schoolwork on a cellphone.<sup>37</sup>

Immigrant students were more likely to indicate that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their schooling or academic success.<sup>38</sup> Studies have found that students who live in small homes with many family members struggle with virtual learning due to lack of study space or privacy to focus on their schooling.<sup>39</sup> Students from immigrant and racialized families are more likely to live in low-income areas characterized by crowding or multigenerational households.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, racialized groups, immigrants and women are overrepresented among health care workers and essential workers.<sup>41, 42</sup> As a result, racialized students and those from immigrant and single-parent households were less likely to have access to parental support with online schooling and had to



*Students from **equity-deserving groups** faced the **greatest challenges during transitions to virtual or remote learning**, including accessing online learning platforms due to technical, economic or other barriers, as well as access to academic support and mental health care.*

rely on self-directed learning.<sup>43, 44</sup> Students from equity-deserving groups faced the greatest challenges during transitions to virtual or remote learning, including accessing online learning platforms due to technical, economic or other barriers, as well as access to academic support and mental health care.<sup>45, 46</sup> Such systemic inequities are expected to persist beyond the pandemic, leaving marginalized students further behind their privileged peers, even after students have resumed in-person learning or when they move to the next grade level.<sup>47</sup>

Research shows that racialized and marginalized students, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, immigrants and students with disabilities, face numerous barriers that result in negative academic and long-term economic outcomes.<sup>48</sup> A study investigating the

experiences of Black people in the Greater Toronto Area found that about one-half of Black students felt that “being Black presented challenges not faced by other students.”<sup>49</sup> These inequities in education for Black students are reflected in disparities in graduation and dropout rates between Black students and their white counterparts. For example, a Toronto District School Board study found that 69% of Black students graduate compared to 84% of white and 87% of other racialized students. Also, Black students have a dropout rate of 20%, which is more than double the rate of other racialized students (9%).<sup>50, 51</sup> In addition, preconceived negative stereotypes about racialized students by teachers lead to lower educational performances and academic achievement.<sup>52</sup> Students with disabilities also face unique barriers related to online schooling, including physical, technological, systemic, financial or attitudinal barriers.<sup>53</sup> For example, students with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism may find it difficult to keep up with their classes due to a lack of school-based routines and structure with online group meetings.<sup>54</sup>

Research on the impact of pandemic-related school disruptions on children reveals a multidimensional lack of engagement in schools that has negatively affected student learning outcomes and emotional well-being.<sup>55, 56</sup> We know that inequalities in children’s outcomes may arise when a family’s ability to invest in their children is hampered by monetary<sup>57</sup> or cognitive constraints,<sup>58</sup> or the stress that accompanies financial hardship.<sup>59</sup> When examining the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning outcomes, students from

groups that struggled before the pandemic faced even greater barriers as they were less likely to have the foundations for success. A survey of youth aged 12 to 17 years found that 51% felt that the pandemic had a very negative impact on their school year and academic success. Moreover, 60% of youth indicated being unmotivated and 57% disliked online learning and virtual classrooms.<sup>60</sup> While these findings represent research on the short-term impacts of school closures due to COVID-19, the long-term social, economic and psychological impacts have yet to be measured.<sup>61</sup> These findings are not surprising considering that research has found that feelings of isolation and lack of teacher contact can contribute to decreased motivation and student attrition.

The effects of prolonged school closures and lockdown measures had the added effect of significant disruptions to protective factors for children and families, leading to increased family stress, trauma and mental health problems for some children and youth.<sup>62</sup> Children First Canada’s *Raising Canada* reported devastating impacts on the mental health and well-being of children from racialized groups during the pandemic, with significant disparities compared to their white counterparts. Rates of mental health concerns are reported to differ across racialized groups, and where intersectional identities exist (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation and disability), these inequities and inequalities are compounded.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, experts contend that academic achievement should not be disconnected from mental health and well-being. Studies have shown that poor



mental health affects educational-related outcomes, leading to lower academic achievement, lower engagement and a higher chance of dropping out of school.<sup>64</sup> Other consequences of the pandemic on children and adolescents were increased screen time, decreased physical activity and increased food insecurity due to school closures and stay-at-home recommendations.<sup>65</sup> A recent report from Public Health Ontario found that children were showing increased behavioural difficulties and that adolescents were showing increased symptoms of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation.<sup>66</sup>

### **Tutoring presents opportunities**

Tutoring provides several benefits to students, including individualized lessons, one-on-one attention, improvement in academic performance and overall attitudes toward learning. Tutoring facilitates self-paced and -directed learning and encourages students to ask questions, which boosts students' self-esteem and confidence.<sup>67</sup> As such, tutoring can help

combat the learning losses resulting from school closures and virtual learning environments, especially for students from equity-deserving groups.<sup>68</sup> A meta-analysis of more than 100 tutoring programs found that tutoring has significant positive impacts on learning outcomes for students and these results hold true across different tutoring programs.<sup>69</sup> The results of the evaluation concluded that tutoring is one of the most “impactful tools available to educators for improving student learning.”<sup>70</sup> It also showed that tutoring programs steered by teachers or paraprofessionals are more effective than tutoring programs facilitated by tutors who are non-professionals (including parents). Finally, it also suggests that virtual tutoring models produce the same benefits as in-person tutoring.

One-on-one tutoring is one of the most effective education intervention strategies<sup>71</sup> in helping students develop a better understanding of concepts, thus leading to more motivated students who tend to work at a more advanced pace.<sup>72, 73</sup> While teaching is generalized, tutoring provides



room for focusing on specific concepts or subject areas, creating opportunities for students to master aspects of their academics that they were either struggling with or in which they needed to gain further understanding.<sup>74</sup> This is due, in part, to the additional steps taken to engage students during a tutoring session. Research has indicated that the classroom approach to concept development traditionally follows a three-step process: initiation, which is an exploratory question by the teacher; reply, which is the response given by the student; and evaluation, which is the teacher's overview of the student's response.<sup>75, 76</sup> Tutoring, however, follows an additional two-step process, beginning with "scaffolding,"<sup>77, 78, 79</sup> where tutors guide students in constructing meaning from the academic

piece by asking further questions and using the session to establish understanding. The final step is a confirmation of understanding,<sup>80</sup> by which the tutor engages the student in a follow-up dialogue to ascertain if the session was beneficial.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting school closures in more than 190 countries amplified the call for tutoring sessions worldwide.<sup>81</sup> Prior studies on digital tutoring indicate that students from equity-deserving communities face a number of systemic barriers that prevent their participation in these sessions, including access to technology and costs.<sup>82, 83, 84, 85</sup> In light of the pandemic, research indicates that the inequality gap has widened as a result of the school closures; students who are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have the support, resources and technology required to continue on their learning trajectory.<sup>86, 87, 88, 89</sup> Students from marginalized and racialized backgrounds were severely affected during the pandemic as a result of factors such as having parents who are essential workers or living in crowded housing.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, for some students, school closures meant a lack of access to nutritious meals and hunger, further impeding their motivation and capacity to engage in online learning. Nevertheless, the latest research shows that tutoring is an effective approach to support students from equity-deserving groups and thus address education inequality.<sup>91</sup>

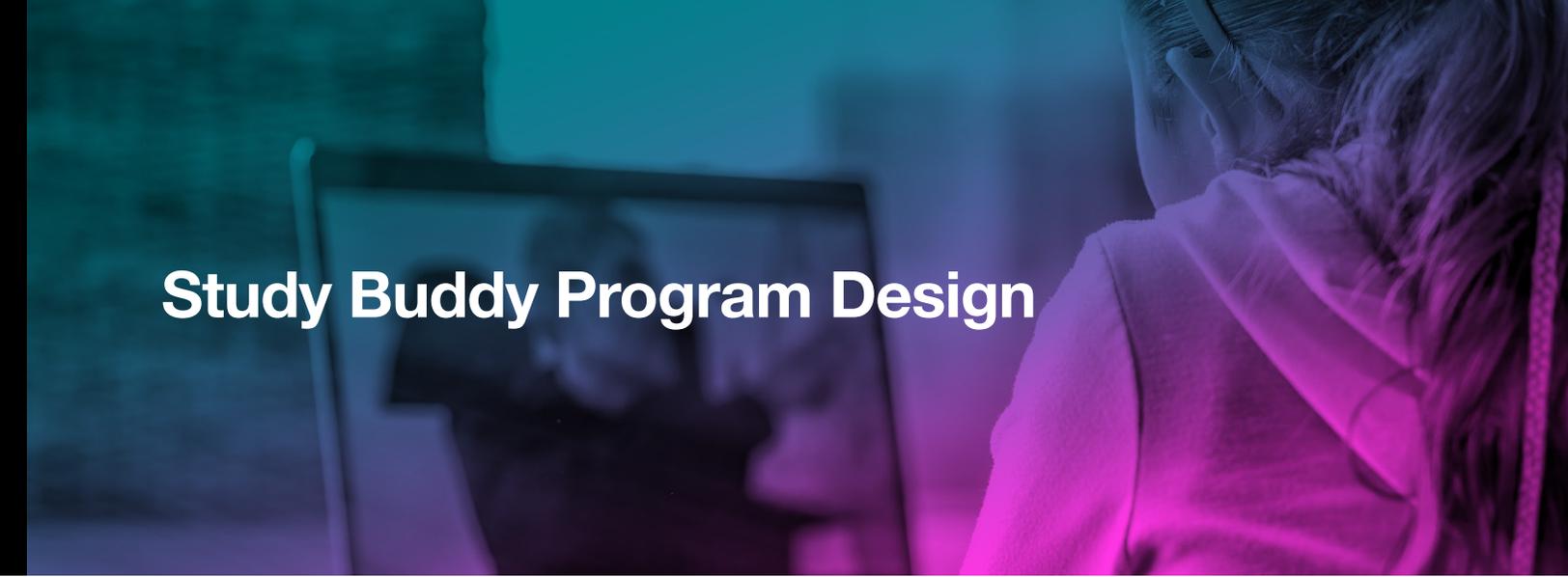
As provinces struggled to respond to the pandemic, school systems, including universities and colleges, continued to experience unprecedented disruption.

Teacher education programs at Ontario faculties of education were faced with the challenges of transitioning to a virtual learning environment. As such, Ontario teacher credentialing programs were required to adjust pedagogy to remote or hybrid formats while opportunities for in-class placements collapsed. School closures meant that teacher candidates could not complete the required in-class placements needed for their degree. Teacher candidates expressed increased stress over the completion of their education programs, and for many the normal fears and anxieties that accompany student teaching were magnified, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and stressed about their placements.<sup>92</sup> However, the transition of tutoring programs to virtual environment could be viewed as an opportunity to address the learning gap among students from equity-deserving communities.

## A systems approach

The barriers to accessing education faced by equity-deserving groups are a result of a complex interplay of factors at the individual, organizational and societal levels. An ecological model of systems can be used to understand these barriers. Researchers have provided key elements to ensure a holistic approach to education.<sup>93, 94, 95</sup> The main aspect of each approach identified by researchers is about the student and their relationship with the educator; other researchers have highlighted the learning environment as important.<sup>96</sup>

Education is a complex system with factors at the societal, organizational and individual levels shaping the experience of students. For example, policies, resources, culture and values, infrastructure and embedded bias shape who has access to quality education and supports within the system.<sup>97</sup> Organizational policies and procedures in school boards and in schools further affect students' educational experiences and attainment. For example, within the K–12 education system, the traditional approach to education disenfranchises racialized students as curricula are built on white versions of history and culture, thereby creating a hostile learning environment for Indigenous and racialized students.<sup>98</sup> Sociodemographic factors at the individual level also shape students' access to education, their experiences and educational attainment. These factors include language abilities, physical and mental health status, and family income. For example, in Toronto, a higher percentage of elementary school students from low-income households fail in reading, writing and mathematics tests compared to students from high-income households.<sup>99</sup> Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of individuals in these organizations also profoundly influence the experience of students. For example, negative stereotypes held by teachers and guidance counsellors have been shown to affect educational performances and academic achievement.<sup>100</sup>



# Study Buddy Program Design

## Program design

The Study Buddy program was developed by the Diversity Institute to facilitate access to tutoring support for children from equity-deserving families during the pandemic. The universities, community and schools collaborated to create a program that addresses the gaps in education by bringing together different stakeholders (families, communities, individual students, community services and education institutions) with one solution.

The Study Buddy Program was launched in May 2020 as part of the national COVID Youth Corps initiative as an emergency response to the abrupt transition to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program aimed to eliminate barriers to high-quality, individualized education by providing free, one-on-one, online tutoring to K–12 students, especially those from equity-deserving communities who were the hardest hit by school closures. Addressing the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for three groups, Study Buddy provided online tutoring services to meet the needs of the following groups: school-aged children who need additional tutoring to meet the needs of remote online learning;

parents, particularly from equity-deserving groups, who need supports during a challenging time; and teacher candidates who need to complete volunteering hours to fulfill graduation requirements.

Participants in the program were recruited through community-based organizations that serve racialized and immigrant families. The recruitment strategy was made possible through partnerships, including with the Lifelong Leadership Institute, the Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women’s Empowerment, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, Midaynta Community Services and several others. Organizations were invited to reach out to their respective communities with enrolment details. To ensure Study Buddy was supporting racialized and newcomer families, prospective participants completed an intake survey that included questions about the equity-deserving groups with which their children would identify.

The K–12 students were accepted based on tutor availability and subject matching. Participating students were provided with access to an online tutoring platform with an interactive whiteboard, video and audio conferencing, and content modules. Students received up to three hours

**FIGURE 1**  
Representation of the Study Buddy program logic model





per week of one-on-one individualized homework and lesson support from trained and qualified professionals. After receiving tutoring support for several months, families were given a satisfaction survey to complete that include questions about any change in their feelings of overall anxiety, well-being and confidence, as well as an opportunity to suggest how to improve the program.

To facilitate the quality delivery of the tutoring program, the Diversity Institute established partnerships among post-secondary teacher-training institutions, such as Laurentian University, Nipissing University, Queen's University, Ontario Tech University, University of Toronto and Lakehead University, as well as non-practicum tutors from Toronto Metropolitan University. The recruitment of qualified teacher-candidates as tutors had the added benefit of enabling teacher candidates to gain the practicum hours required for graduation. Being teacher candidates, they were already subject experts, having completed (or concurrently completing) a bachelor's degree in a teachable area. While with Study Buddy, many of these teacher candidates were also completing courses with their respective faculties of education. As such, they were being instructed in pedagogical strategies, ministry guidelines and curricular expectations. To highlight the barriers faced by racialized and newcomer students accessing quality education, the Diversity Institute provided tutors with anti-Black racism training and other workshops. As with parents, tutors enrolled in the program were asked to provide information during registration and completed a satisfaction survey at the end of tutoring a cohort.



# Study Buddy Program Evaluation

This section presents the methods used for evaluation and the key findings from the analysis of data gathered over the last two years of the pandemic. The two main sections examine the impact of the program on parents and students, and on teacher candidates. Thus, demographic details about the families and tutors gathered during registration is presented, along with the end of the program satisfaction survey, which sheds light on families' and teacher candidates' perceptions of the program.

## Methods

To understand the impact of the Study Buddy on K–12 students, their families and tutors who are teacher candidates, we administered two sets of surveys to parents and tutors: a pre-program registration survey and a post-program satisfaction survey. Additionally, we used the log data to identify families and children who used the service during the target period.

- > **Registration form for parents:**  
This survey collected basic socioeconomic status information and demographic data of parents and students, as well as their needs for tutoring services prior to program. Demographic questions for parents included their gender, immigration status, identification with equity-deserving

groups, educational level, language used at home and number of children. Demographic questions for children included their gender, age, immigration status, race or ethnicity, disability (if applicable) and the school subjects for which they would benefit receiving tutoring.

- > **Registration form for tutors:**  
This survey collected information about teacher candidates prior to the program. Participants reported their demographic information, such as gender, identification with equity-deserving groups, year in the university, and subjects of interest for tutoring, including mathematics, chemistry, biology, French and elementary courses.
- > **User data:**  
This is the log data downloaded from the digital platform, which recorded which students attended tutoring sessions.
- > **Satisfaction survey for parents:**  
This survey was administered to parents after participation in the program. Parents were asked to share their opinions on whether the program helped their children in academic learning and social skills, whether the program improved their well-being and what challenges they encountered in the program.



> **Satisfaction survey for tutors:**

This survey was administered to teacher candidates after they delivered tutoring services. Tutors were asked to share their experiences about the number of students, the subject they taught, their observation on the experiences of the students and their opinions on the skills they learned during their participation, as well as the challenges they encountered.

The registration questionnaires and satisfaction surveys were created through an online survey platform (Qualtrics).

The first cohort was the pilot-testing phase for the program, and participant data was not collected in the same way as the rest and therefore not compatible for analysis. This report uses data from four cohorts of participants:

- > **Cohort 2:**  
September 2020 to November 2020
- > **Cohort 3:**  
January 2021 to September 2021
- > **Cohort 4:**  
July 2021 to August 2021
- > **Cohort 5:**  
September 2021 to December 2021

Descriptive and bivariate analysis was conducted using the registration and satisfaction survey data from families and tutors. We also conducted thematic analysis with the feedback gathered from families through open-ended questions.

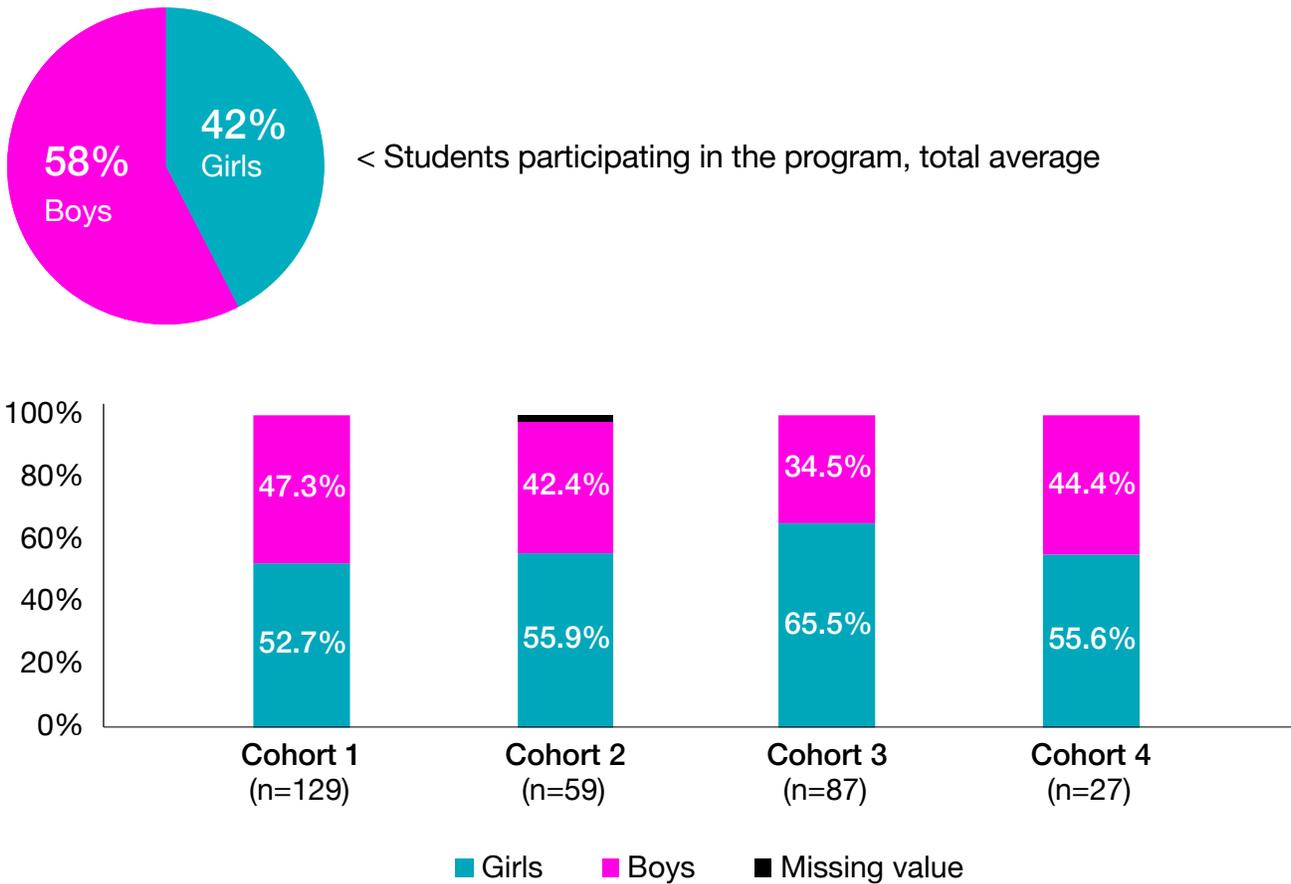
## Program highlights

To date, the Study Buddy program has enrolled 684 students from 451 families as well as 331 tutors. During its operation, 302 students from 247 families received free services during more than 12,800 individual tutoring sessions and 8,600 hours of tutoring K–12 subjects, including mathematics, chemistry, biology, French and elementary courses.

At registration, most families had enrolled one child (n=266, 59%), followed by those with two children (n=137, 30%) and three children (n=48, 11%). Cohort 1 saw the highest number of families (n=180, 40%) registered in the program, which was during the peak of the pandemic.

**FIGURE 2**

**Gender of students participating in the Study Buddy program**



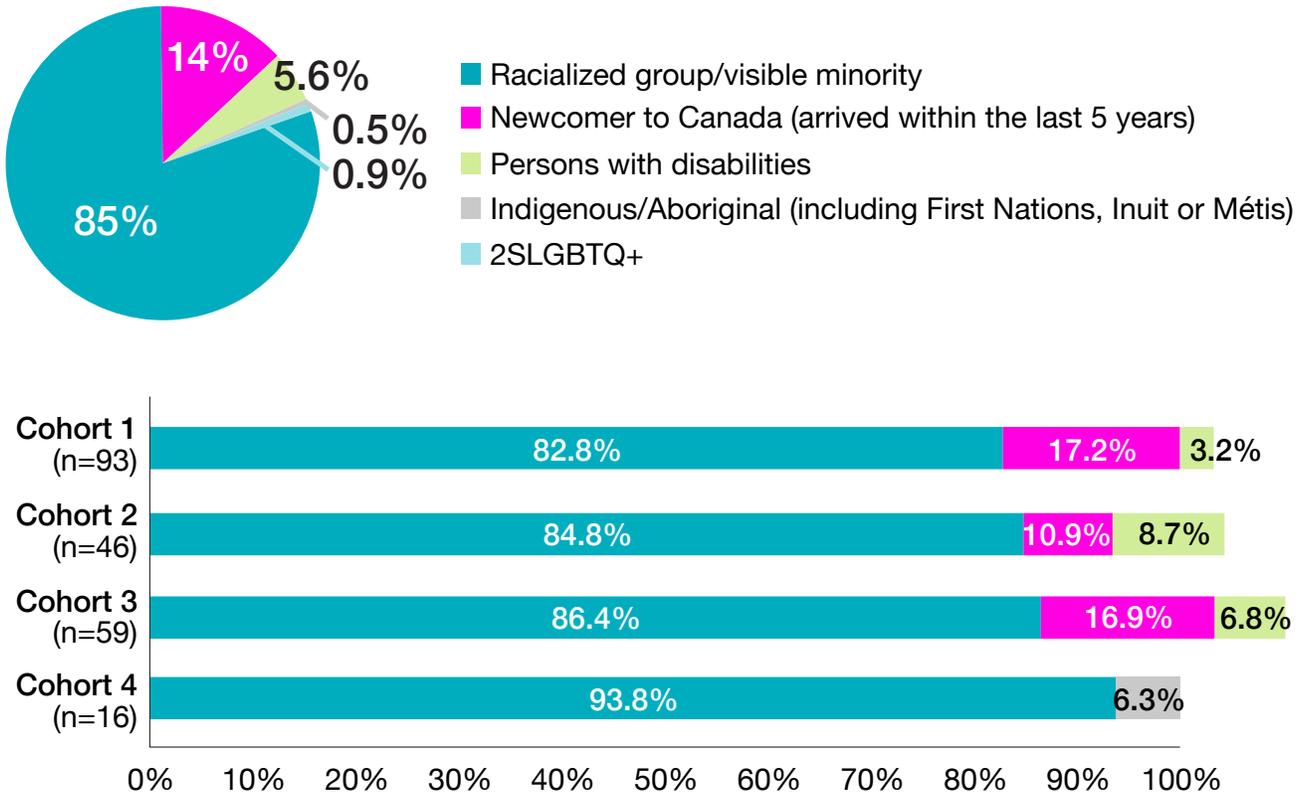
A total of 302 students from 247 families participated in the Study Buddy program. Most were girls (n=302, 57.3%); boys made up 42.4% of the total (n=302). In Cohort 2, self-identification for one child was not provided by the family (n=1, 0.3%) (Figure 2). It is notable that only 44.2% of the registrants participated in the program. The digital divide is a possible factor, among others, that prevented or discouraged participation. Because we could not conduct research with those who did not end up taking part, the reasons remain unclear. More research should be conducted with those who did not proceed with the program after registration.



*It is notable that **only 44.2% of the registrants participated in the program.** The digital divide is a possible factor, among others, that prevented or discouraged participation.*

**FIGURE 3**

Families' identification with equity-deserving groups for children in the Study Buddy program



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to families selecting multiple identities.

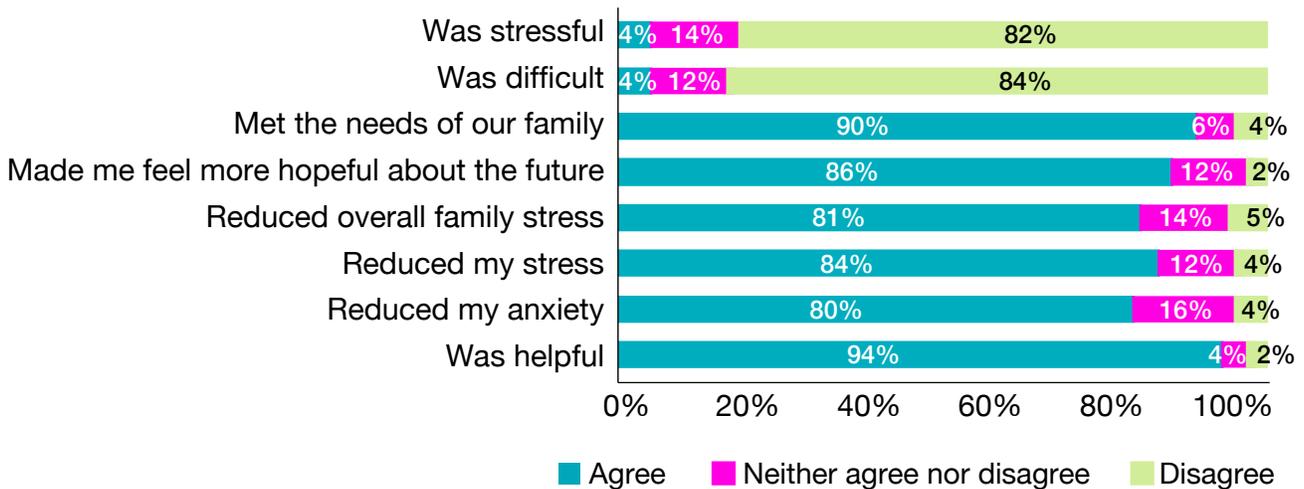


***Among the children who self-identified, 85% of them were racialized, followed by 14% as newcomers who arrived within the last five years, and 5.6% were persons with disabilities.***

The families were encouraged to share how their children would identify as belonging to different equity-deserving groups (Figure 3), which revealed that among the children who self-identified (n=214), most of them were racialized (n=182, 85%), followed by newcomers who arrived within the last five years (n=30, 14%) and persons with disabilities (n=12, 5.6%). Very few children identified as Indigenous (n=1, 0.5%) and 2SLGBTQ+ (n=2, 0.9%).

**FIGURE 4**

Families' perception of the impact of the Study Buddy program on parents' and family stress



## Impact on parents

The impact of the Study Buddy program on the well-being of parents was assessed on a Likert scale by asking them to confirm their level of agreement with each of the statements. A total of 141 families responded to the satisfaction questions incorporated in this chapter. There were some missing cases in these variables ranging from one to 11, which were excluded from the analysis, and the valid percentage values are included here. The statements about assessing the impact of the program on the parents' and families' stress levels (Figure 4) revealed that a vast majority of them found it helpful (n=130, 94%) and expressed that Study Buddy met their needs (n=123, 90%). Also, many of them disagreed with the statement that the program was stressful (n=110, 82%) or difficult (n=114, 84%).

## Reduced stress and anxiety

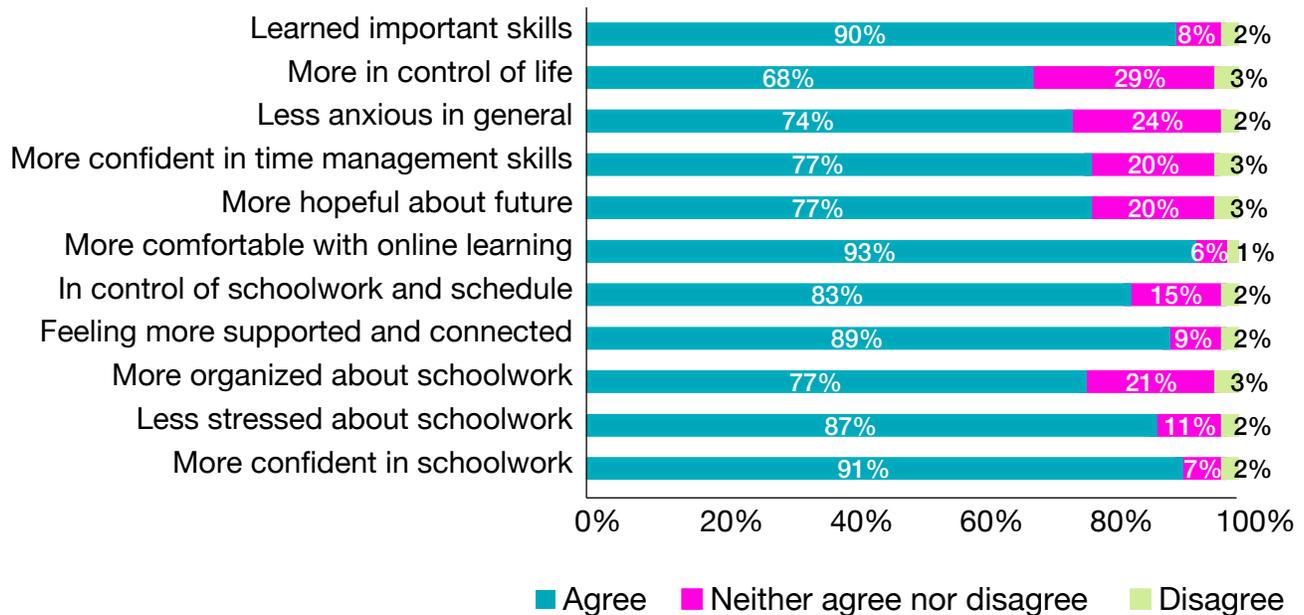
Parents expressed appreciation of the effectiveness of the program as a means of keeping their children engaged, while reducing the stress and anxiety associated with the pandemic:

*"This was a huge opportunity for my girls. They were both blessed with knowledgeable teachers who challenged them and kept them focused and engaged with their learning. Thank you!"*

*"The overall experience of the Study Buddy program has been life altering for both my daughter and I. And, I am not talking about the intellectual work, while that saw significant improvement for us too. I am talking about the psychological, emotional and social gains that I have seen in my daughter."*

**FIGURE 5**

**Families' perception of the impact of the Study Buddy program on students' learning**



The informal feedback provided by families strengthened the quantitative findings that suggested the program was helpful and useful, and confirmed the role of the program in contributing to the well-being of not only the students in their approach to learning, but also the parents in reducing their stress level, especially related to their children's education during the pandemic.

## Impact on students

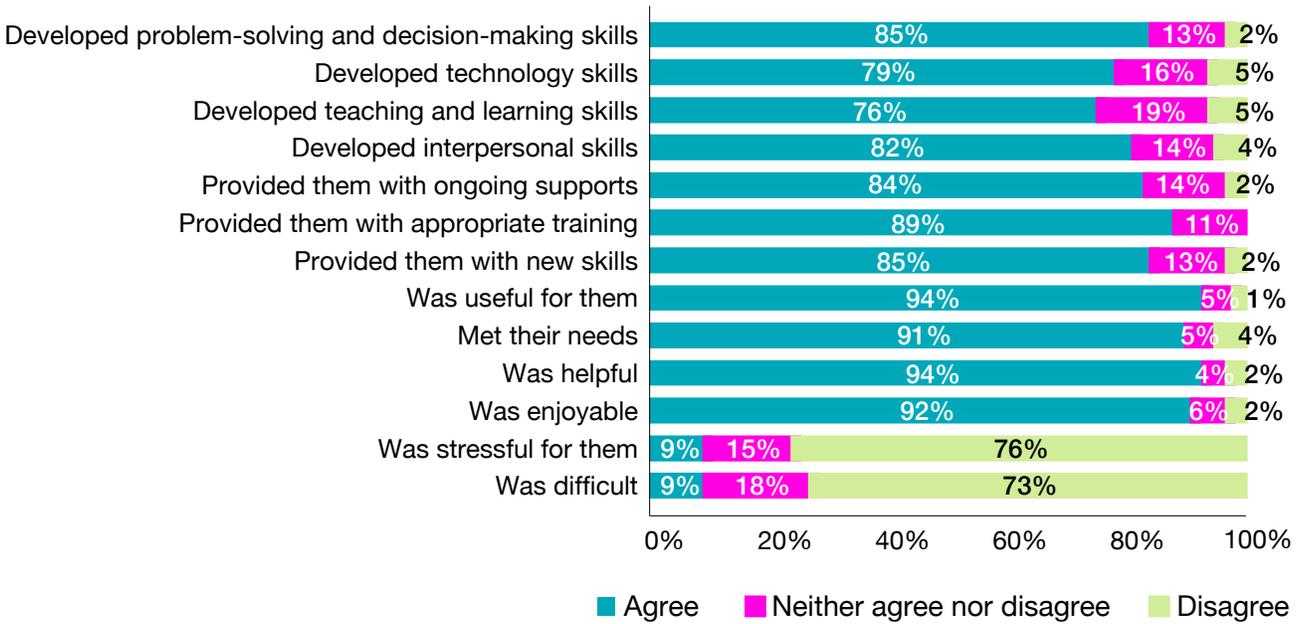
A majority of the families agreed that Study Buddy made them more comfortable with online learning (n=126, 93%) and more confident in schoolwork (n=123, 91%), and that their child learned important skills (n=124, 90%; Figure 5). Sixty-eight per cent (n=88) of families agreed with the statement that their child felt more in control of their life.

Assessment of students' experience with Study Buddy (Figure 6) revealed that a vast majority of families agreed that their child's experience in the program was useful (n=130, 94%), helpful (n=129, 94%), enjoyable for them (n=128, 92%) and met their needs (n=126, 91%). More than two-thirds of families agreed that the program offered students the opportunity to gain experience in teaching and learning skills (n=104, 76%) and technology skills (n=106, 79%). Also, many parents disagreed with statements that the program was stressful (n=105, 76%) or difficult (n=100, 73%) for their child.

Parents also provided feedback on the short-term impact of the program through open-ended questions that were analyzed to identify common themes.

**FIGURE 6**

**Families' perception of the impact of the Study Buddy program on students' experience**



### Gaining access to quality educational resources

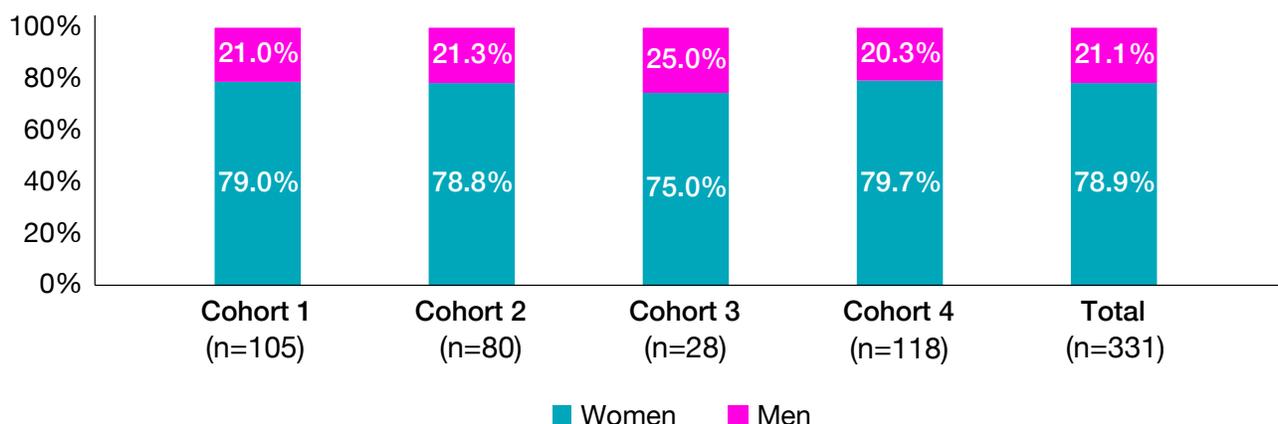
One of the core themes that emerged from the feedback was the gap in access to quality educational resources as a result of the pandemic and the Study Buddy program's role in filling this gap:

*"Please keep doing it, it helped fill in the gap so much with the COVID-19 missing of classes. I realized my eight-year-old son was more receptive to the teacher while being taught than when I was guiding him to study."*

### Positive experiences

Parents highlighted how their positive experiences with a tutor for one subject area encouraged them to register their other children and expand the subject areas requested for their children:

*"We only leveraged the Study Buddy program for one of my two children, and only for a specific area—math. I feel that the relationship between my child and tutor is fantastic, and would love to explore more tutoring, more subject areas, and add my younger child (going into Grade 5) to the program if possible. This is a program that my child looked forward to—eager to get to the computer and get started on days tutoring was booked, and was much more engaged in this program than regular schoolwork during the pandemic."*

**FIGURE 7****Gender of tutors that participated in the Study Buddy program****Impact on tutors**

The examination of the tutor registration data collected from four cohorts during the period September 2020 to December 2021 reveals there were 331 participants in the program. A vast majority of these tutors (Figure 7) identified as women (n=261, 79%), followed by men (n=70, 21%). Among those who identified as women, almost one-fifth were racialized (n=44, 17%).

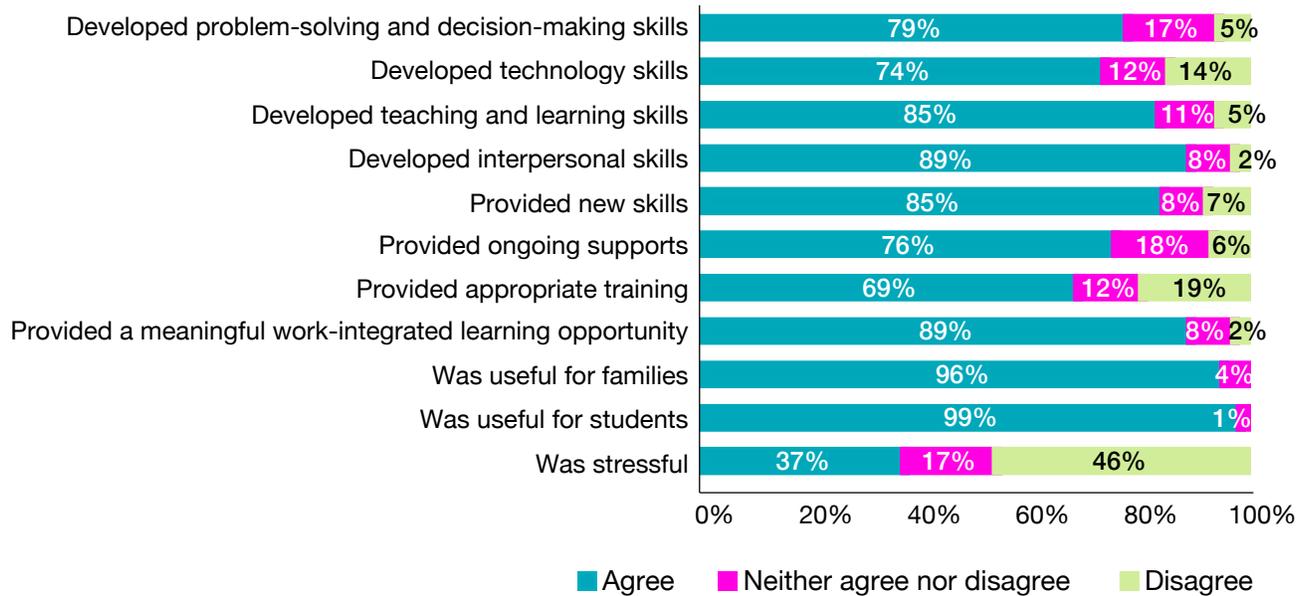
Among the tutors, 302 self-identified as belonging to various equity-deserving groups (Table 1), with some identifying with multiple groups. A majority of these did not identify as being part of any of the listed groups (i.e., not applicable, n=189, 63%). Fewer identified as racialized (n=59, 20%), 2SLGBTQ+ (n=40, 13%), and persons with disabilities (n=17, 6%). Tutors from non-equity deserving groups were more likely to engage in this program (n=189, 63%).

**TABLE 1****Tutors' self-identification with equity-deserving groups**

Self-Identified Groups	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Total
Racialized	16	20	14	9	59
Newcomer to Canada (arrived within the last five years)	2	1	0	0	3
Person with a disability	2	1	2	12	17
Indigenous or Aboriginal (including First Nations, Inuit or Métis)	1	0	0	3	4
2SLGBTQ+	9	12	6	13	40
Living in a rural, remote or northern area of Canada	3	2	0	2	7
Not applicable	66	42	8	73	189

**FIGURE 8**

**Tutors' experience with the Study Buddy program**



The tutors' satisfaction with the Study Buddy program was assessed on a Likert scale by asking them to confirm their level of agreement with each of the statements. A total of 84 tutors responded to the satisfaction questions (Figure 8). Almost all of them felt that the experience in Study Buddy for students and families was useful (n=83, 99% and n=81, 96% respectively). Most tutors also found the experience to be beneficial personally, giving them the opportunity to gain experience in interpersonal skills (n=75, 89%), a meaningful work-integrated learning placement (n=75, 89%), new skills (n=71, 85%), and teaching and learning skills (n=71, 85%). However, for the statement regarding perceived stress for the tutors, more than one-third (n=31, 37%) expressed feeling stressed, and most of these respondents (n=22, 71%) were from non-equity-deserving groups.

The short- and long-term benefits of working with students through the Study Buddy program was highlighted through feedback received from open-ended questions on the tutor satisfaction survey. These qualitative explanations strengthened the quantitative findings, where teacher candidates identified the program as providing them the opportunity to have a meaningful work-integrated learning experience and gain new skills. When tutors were asked to reflect on the impact of the program on them, their responses highlighted the ways in which their skills were further developed as educators, the value of understanding their students, and the personal challenges and barriers they faced.



## Enhanced skills

The tutors reported acquiring new skills as well as improving their current skills. Coping with the unique challenges faced by the diverse student group further enhanced their skills.

*“Professionally, it has given me valuable experiences that I will be able to take with me and implement as I am teaching ... I have learned a new platform, I have learned new ways to engage students virtually, I have become a lot more well-versed in the curriculum, and I have developed new skills to differentiate instruction. Not to mention every opportunity to teach and interact with students is beneficial to my teaching career and will only benefit me as an educator.”*

*“[The Study Buddy program] has definitely opened my eyes to the personal and academic struggles my students may face. Often students would tell me that they didn’t understand something in class, but the teacher*

*had to move for whatever reason. After you miss one thing, particularly in science, the rest of the lesson becomes unintelligible and students would check out. I want to make sure I teach lessons that are digestible with questions along the way to check understanding. I also truly understand the value of one-on-one help. I want to ensure that I am available to help my students and may even consider tutoring in the future.”*

*“I am more aware of the difficulties that students of colour and new immigrants to Canada face in the education system. Through taking both the Deepening the Divide and Anti-Racism workshops as well as my own experience tutoring, I have really come to understand how students’ educational experiences differ based on their race and where they are from. This has made me a more aware and conscientious teacher. I will take this knowledge with me and apply it to my future teaching situations with the goal of providing extra support for marginalized students so as to ensure their success in school.”*

## Study Buddy program highlights: Peel District School Board cohort



**136**  
Students



**108**  
Families



**52**  
Tutors



**6,977**  
Sessions



**7,337**  
Hours

Note: Numbers are based on active users. Completed sessions do not include those that were skipped.

## Challenges

The tutors identified technology-related issues and working from home as challenges. When asked about challenges with working from home, tutors reported risk of losing Internet service or working with students who had slow or unreliable Internet that could interrupt the 30-minute sessions:

Additionally, research points to women having to cope with the unpaid labour of home maintenance during the pandemic while working. This was highlighted by tutors who reported burnout from having multiple responsibilities in the home. The following responses are from tutors who identified as women:

*"I am currently living at home where I am responsible for taking care of my parents and our dogs. While working full time during the day, balancing an in-class placement for 5 weeks and my own university course material fatigue was also an issue."*

*"Distractions from those around me and struggles focusing because of a lack of motivation."*

## Peel District School Board cohort

The most recent cohort of the Study Buddy program was recruited in partnership with the Peel District School Board (PDSB), one of the largest school boards in Canada. The program ran from April 2022 to June 2023 and provided free, individualized and online tutoring to Black and Indigenous students in K-8 in the PDSB. The program's goals were to have 120 participating students, with a majority who self-identify as Black or Indigenous, and to improve students' academic performance and confidence. However, unlike previous cohorts, the PDSB cohort did not use teacher candidates. Instead, individuals with varying educational backgrounds were hired to provide tutoring support.



## **PDSB program highlights**

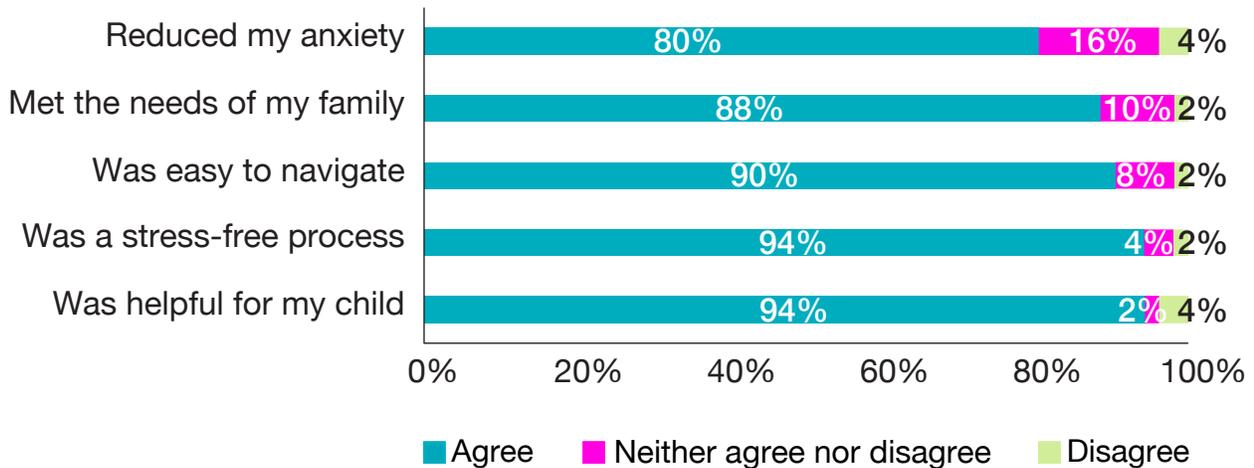
From April 2022 to June 2023, the program had 52 tutors who provided 7,034 hours (equivalent to 6,692 sessions) of online tutoring to 136 students from 107 families from the PDSB.

Similar to previous cohorts, families were required to complete a registration survey, which included self-identification questions about their children. An analysis of this data found that a relatively equal proportion of boys and girls participated (52.4% boys and 47.8% girls). For those children who identified as members of an equity-deserving group, 86% were racialized (with 47.8% identifying as Black), 8.8% were Indigenous, 5.9% were newcomers who had arrived in Canada within the last five years, and 2.9% were students with disabilities.

Tutors also self-identified when registering with the program. Like previous cohorts, most tutors identified as women (80.8% women vs. 19.2% men). In terms of equity-deserving groups, 71.2% of tutors identified as racialized, 9.8% as members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and 7.7% as persons with disabilities.

**FIGURE 9**

**Families' experiences with the Study Buddy program**



**Impact on families**

A total of 52 families responded to the end-of-program satisfaction survey, with missing responses for Likert scale questions ranging from 1 to 3. Similar to previous cohorts, families reported a positive experience with the Study Buddy program, with the vast majority expressing that it was helpful for their children (n=52, 94%), a stress-free process (n=51, 94%), easy to navigate (n=52, 90%), met their needs (n=52, 88%) and reduced their anxieties (n=51, 80%) (Figure 9).

**Families reported positive experiences with the Study Buddy program:**

**94%**

Was helpful for their children

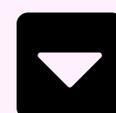


**94%**

Was a stress-free process

**90%**

Was easy to navigate

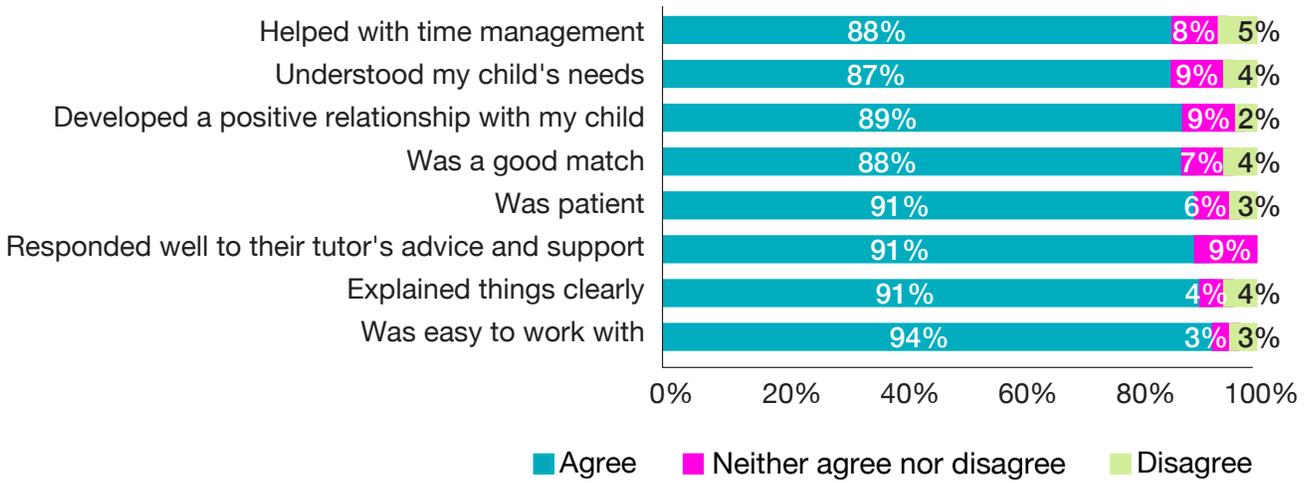


**80%**

Reduced their anxieties

**FIGURE 10**

**Families' perceptions of the impact of the Study Buddy program tutors on students' experiences**



**An assessment of students' experience revealed that most found their tutors:**

**94%**

Easy to work with



**97%**

Explained things clearly

**91%**

Were patient



**88%**

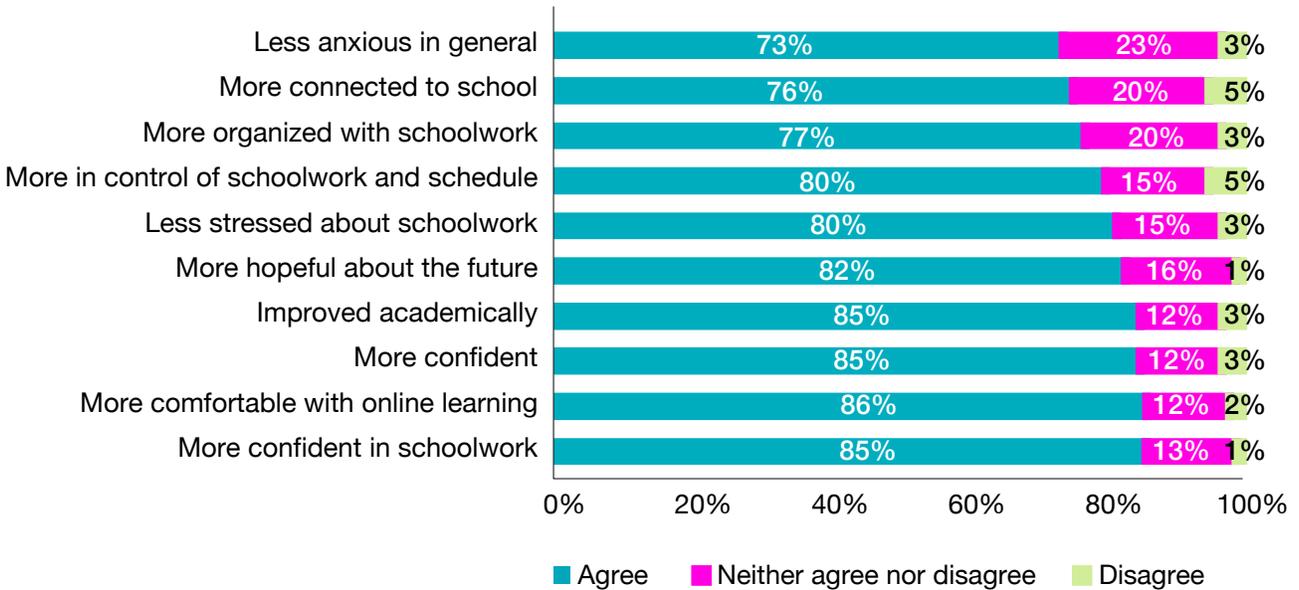
Were a good match

**Impact on students**

Families reported that their children were pleased with the support they received from their tutors (Figure 10). An assessment of students' experience, from their family's perspective, revealed that most found their tutors easy to work with (n=65, 94%), explained things clearly (n=67, 97%), were patient (n=65, 91%), were a good match (n=67, 88%), developed a positive relationship with their child (n=65, 89%), understood their children's needs (n=67, 87%) and helped with time management (n=66, 88%). Also, 91% (n=64) indicated that their children responded well to their tutor's advice and support.

**FIGURE 11**

**Families' perceptions of the impact of the Study Buddy program on students' experiences**



Similar to previous cohorts, families reported that Study Buddy had a positive impact on their child's personal growth, well-being and academics (Figure 11). Most indicated that their children were more confident in schoolwork (n=67, 85%), more comfortable with online learning (n=66, 86%), more confident in general (n=66, 85%), more hopeful about the future (n=67, 82%) and less stressed about school work (n=66, 82%). The vast majority also reported that their children improved academically (n=65, 85%). Lesser change was observed in whether families felt their children were more in control of their school work and schedule (n=65, 80%), more organized with school work (n=66, 77%), more connected to school (n=66, 76%) and less anxious in general (n=64, 73%).



*Families reported that Study Buddy had a positive impact on their child's personal growth, well-being and academics.*



Qualitative responses from open-ended questions further contextualize families' positive experiences with Study Buddy. They expressed several benefits of participating in the program, such as increased student confidence, use of interactive technology and effective student-tutor matching.

*"The coordinator and the instructor created a very welcoming environment. I have seen a significant enhancement in my child's confidence with math skills."*

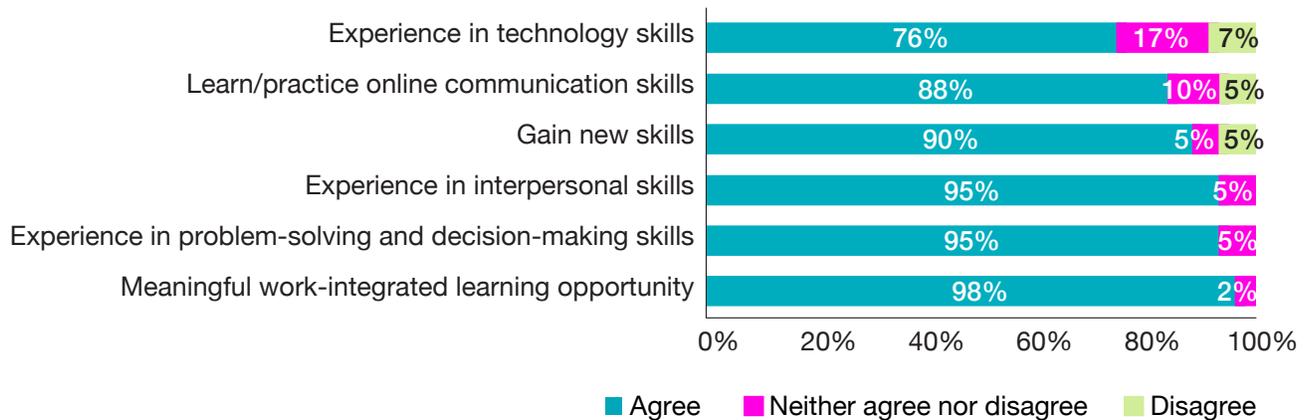
*"[The Lesson Space] enables whiteboards so [it] allowed for ice breakers and the tutor to see the work being done by students."*

*"[The coordinator] has been very supportive and helpful [in] matching the right tutor for my child who has ADHD and autism. The tutor matched with my son has been a wonderful influence in my son's life."*

Despite such positive reviews, some parents felt that the program could be improved by hiring more tutors who consistently provide three hours of weekly tutoring and those who could support French-language tutoring.

**FIGURE 12**

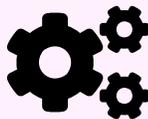
**Tutors' experience with the Study Buddy program**



**Tutors reported the program offered:**

**95%**

A chance to gain experience in problem-solving and decision-making skills



**95%**

Interpersonal skills

**90%**

New skills in general



**81%**

Opportunity to practice online communication skills

**Impact on tutors**

A total of 43 tutors responded to the end-of-program satisfaction survey, with missing responses for Likert scale questions ranging from 1 to 5. Tutors reported that the Study Buddy program had benefits for families and students, with the vast majority reporting it was helpful for students (n=41, 100%) and families (n=40, 93%). Even for tutors themselves, the program provided opportunities for them to build and strengthen their skills (Figure 12). Most reported it offered a chance to gain experience in problem-solving and decision-making skills (n=42, 95%), interpersonal skills (n=42, 95%) and new skills in general (n=41, 90%), as well as to practice online communication skills (n=41, 81%). Lesser change was reported for gaining experience in technology skills, with only 76% of tutors agreeing (n=42).



Qualitative responses from open-ended questions further contextualize tutors' positive experiences with Study Buddy. They expressed several benefits of participating in the program, including supporting marginalized students, increased student confidence and supporting a growth mindset.

*"This program is very important and essential for the lives of marginalized students. Throughout my employment at Study Buddy I witnessed my student's ability to read, spell [and] do math increase. I also saw their growth. I believe students should have the ability to meet with tutors one-on-one for support of their academic needs. Furthermore, this opportunity was beneficial as it helped shape students' goals for the future. Students as young as [those in] Grade 3 are able to ask about my experience as a Black student and envision themselves as university and graduate students; this representation is important."*

*"Helping students feel that it is okay to mess up."*

*"Have tutors be aware of the fixed mindset vs. growth mindset and how to facilitate those conversations with their pupils. I observed an immense increase in confidence with students who practised growth mindset check-in activities with me."*

Tutors also provided recommendations to improve the Study Buddy program, such as having more learning materials and additional training on troubleshooting online platforms.



# Conclusions & Recommendations

In Canada, education is one of the strongest drivers of social mobility, yet persistent gaps remain in academic achievement, contributing to unequal outcomes in employment, health and belonging.

Education plays a critical role in enhancing upward social mobility, even for individuals who start at an income disadvantage.<sup>101</sup>

We are only now beginning to understand the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning loss and evidence of its disproportionate effect on equity-deserving communities. Research has suggested a range of interventions to help level the playing field, and tutoring has been identified as one of the interventions that can have a significant impact.

Launched at the beginning of the pandemic in response to concerns from local organizations serving the Black community, including the Lifelong Leadership Institute, Jean Augustine Centre and Black Business and Professional Association, the Study Buddy program was an innovative approach to addressing learning loss among youth, especially those from racialized, Black and Indigenous communities; providing support for families; and providing opportunities for student teachers who found their opportunities for placements severely

limited. While more research is needed, the preliminary evidence suggests that students, their families and the tutors all benefited from the program.

Tutoring is a well-established way to support students; different models exist, including school-based programs, community-based programs and private tutoring. The Study Buddy program took advantage of the shift to online learning and the need for student teacher placements to develop and launch quickly a free online service staffed primarily by volunteer student teachers, promoted through community organizations directly to parents, and supported through the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre. More recently, governments across the country have directly invested in tutoring programs, often in collaboration with school boards. The Study Buddy program adapted to the changing environment, testing new features and approaches and working in schools and in collaboration with schools in the Peel District School Board, using paid tutors and high school student tutors.

Based on the preliminary research and evaluation of the Study Buddy program, the following recommendations are proposed.

- > **Recognize the importance of tutoring as an intervention to support student learning** and explore how different models can meet the needs of different learners (face-to-face, online, individual, group, school-based, community-based, and a combination of these).
- > **Ensure an EDI lens is applied to the development of tutoring programs.** For example, understanding that barriers to tutoring may include not only knowledge and resources (time and money), but also trust and engagement with traditional systems of learning and their administration.
- > **Explore the broader impacts of student supports on families and communities.** The motivation for the Study Buddy Program came largely from parents in the Black community who were directly affected by the pandemic and worried about their ability to support their children, rather than from educators.
- > **Explore the benefits of tutor training and opportunities as part of the development of teachers and skills development.** For example, Study Buddy supported skills development among student teachers and subsequently developed tutor training programs for high school students to enable them to earn money and develop skills tutoring younger students.
- > **Ensure tutoring programs include mandatory training not just in pedagogy, but also in EDI, anti-Black racism, Truth and Reconciliation, and strategies to create inclusive learning environments.**
- > **Recognize the opportunities created by digitization and new technologies** such as adaptive learning to enhance tutoring while recognizing the challenges of the digital divide. Many of those most in need of support are least likely to have access to the devices, networks and skills required.
- > **Always consider the importance of wraparound supports,** including access to technology, mental health, counselling and other forms of assistance for students and their families.
- > **Understand that the foundation of Canada's social and economic well-being rests on education,** and success in K-12 sets the foundation for future education and skills. Work to advance EDI must begin upstream.
- > **Continue to develop robust, inclusive and accessible models of tutoring** and to assess what works for whom using disaggregated data.

Research on the impact of unequal access to education and socioeconomic opportunities for racialized youth in general, and on Black youth in particular, is extensive. However, our understanding of the short- and long-term effects of extended school closures on these demographic groups is still developing and warrants further examination and innovative, collaborative and inclusive approaches to leveling the playing field.

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Procrastinator  
Specialist  
Procrastinator  
Cautious  
Mentor  
Sustainer  
- Contacted  
- Planner  
- Organizer  
- Inquirer  
- Communicator  
- Specialist