Model Summary

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Online Tutoring

Students are provided with one-on-one or small group online tutoring sessions with qualified maths teachers familiar with the Australian Curriculum. These sessions are additional and complementary to in-class maths learning.

Which challenges does the model address?

- **Differentiation** – As teachers often focus on the 'middle ability' students that make up the majority of classrooms, low and high achieving students can miss out on stretch or foundational opportunities.

Target Groups

The model best suits:

- Schools or classes with limited access to specialist maths teachers such as regional and remote schools.
- Students with specific needs or are performing below standard achievement levels.
- Students performing above standard achievement levels who are at risk of disengaging with STEM pathways.

How the model works

The model uses existing meeting apps such as MS Teams, Webex or Zoom to run sessions. It can also use learning management systems or content management systems where programs involve lesson plans or pre-developed content.

The model operates as follows:

- Tutors who are experienced maths teachers or tertiary students in a relevant degree, from Australia.
- Students are matched with a tutor who works with them on an online one-to-one or small-group basis.
- Students are tutored for a set number of sessions or period of time.
- Tutoring is provided out of school hours, under appropriate cybersecurity controls via an online meeting platform.
- Tutors identify individual student needs and deliver tailored sessions to support academic growth and independent learning.
- In the case of the Learning+ program, a structured interview consisting of 20 questions, developed by the University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education, is used to identify core learning needs and to develop a learning pedagogy for the student and tutor.
- Most programs provide supporting resources. In some instances, tutors draw from pre-set lesson plans.

Two examples of the model in use are:

- Learning+ - A program of the South Australian Department of Education targeting students in years 6 to 9 with maths ability either above or below the Standard of Educational Achievement (SAE) for their year level. Tutors are qualified maths teachers and three sessions a week of 30 minutes duration are provided.
- Cluey Learning – A commercial provider of online tutoring who has delivered tutoring to over 17,000 students in years 2-12 since it was founded in 2017. Tutors are 'high ATAR school graduates' with access to a proprietary learning management system, which is 'based on each state or territory's curriculum'.

Success factors

- Having experienced maths teachers as the tutors.
- Having number interviews and/or diagnostic tools to enable curriculum based personalised learning plan.
- Having professional learning communities of specialised teachers for tutors to part of and learn from.
- Availability of responsive and skilled IT support for tutors, students and parents.

Caution factors

- Tutor programs should not be considered an alternative for effective in school learning. They should be additive and complementary to classroom maths learning.
- Evidence-based diagnostics such as the Number interviews developed by the MGSE, and worksheets aligned with curriculum learning, are better than one-size-fits-all resources that are offered in some mainstream programs. In particular, it is important that resources assist students to demonstrate their thinking and working such that logic misconceptions are identified and addressed.
- Digital literacy is an impediment for some students and there is a risk of exacerbating inequalities in learning. This is relevant not only for the student, but also for the parent where there is an expectation they will oversee or be involved with online tutoring sessions.
- Many one-to-one programs are run out of hours and outside of school grounds. It is critical that programs maintain appropriate cyber-security to protect student data and access, and also to ensure appropriate checks and balances are in place to provide a safe learning space for children.

In order to operate well, students need access to devices and broadband to access tutoring.

Cost

One-on-one tutoring programs are expensive, both to coordinate and to deliver. Historically, one-on-one tutoring has been available commercially for those who can afford to pay. The Learning+ cost per 30-minute tutoring session delivered is approximately $80-$90 when the cost of the maths qualified teacher is combined with the program's operational overheads to support recruitment, student / mentor matching, and IT support. Commercial providers' advertised rates are in the range $65-$85 per session and most provide tutors with lesser qualifications than Learning+.