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Teach For America's Ignite Fellowship Earns Recognition for Rigorous Program Design and Celebrates National Tutoring Appreciation Week

The Recently Badged Program Drives Academic Growth and Belonging in Elementary Reading, Middle School Math and High School Post-Secondary Access Across Communities

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, OCTOBER 7, 2024—As National Tutoring Appreciation Week (October 7–11) highlights programs supporting students nationwide, education nonprofit and leadership development organization [Teach For America](#) celebrates the fifth year of its national high-impact tutoring program, the [Ignite Fellowship](#). Ignite was recently recognized with a program design badge from the [National Student Support Accelerator](#) (NSSA), validating the program for the rigor of its design and alignment to research-based best practices for high-impact tutoring, as defined by the NSSA.

Launched across nine schools in Phoenix, AZ in 2020, the Ignite Fellowship currently operates across 33 communities and is embedded in 120 schools across the country. With the pandemic dramatically changing how children were accessing learning, with over 93% of students learning remotely, the program was designed to meet the needs of the moment and build beyond it. Ignite is on track to bring tutoring services to over 4,800 students in grades K–12, delivering virtual tutoring and mentorship that fosters both academic achievement and a sense of belonging. The program's recent badging highlights Ignite as a strong model for school-based tutoring.

While student achievement has made some progress since the pandemic, significant gaps remain, especially among students from [low income communities](#). [Research](#) indicates that high-impact tutoring can boost student achievement by 3–15 months of learning, yielding positive outcomes in both reading and math. However, a [survey](#) of the nation's largest school districts revealed that less than 10% of students received any form of district-sponsored tutoring last year.

"National Tutoring Appreciation Week is a moment to celebrate the critical role tutoring plays in supporting the unique learning needs of all students," said Katie Tennessen Hooten, founder of Teach For America's Ignite Fellowship. "All kids deserve access to individualized learning. Affluent families have always been able to leverage tutoring; in-school tutoring makes it possible for all kids to access personalized learning so that they can learn, lead, and thrive."

Co-designed with principals and classroom teachers to accelerate learning in elementary reading, middle school math, and high school post-secondary access, Ignite is designed to be deeply integrated with schools' existing learning goals and strategies by leveraging school-based staff, curriculum, and assessments. Ignite tutors (fellows) are supported by school-based veteran

educators who adapt the school's curriculum to support fellows to individualize tutoring sessions with 2–3 students. Fellows work virtually with the same students three times a week during the course of the school day for approximately 3 hours a week over 12 weeks.

New data from the 2023–2024 school year illustrates Ignite's success in both student achievement and well-being:

- 250K+ additional hours of learning
- 95% of schools report that Ignite fellows had a positive impact on students' academic growth
- 95% of students report that their fellows taught them in the way they learned best

Additionally, an analysis of data from Ignite partner schools shows:

- On average, 4th grade reading students saw 4.4x their expected growth on the iReady assessment
- On average, 6th grade math students saw over 2–3x their expected growth on the NWEA Map assessment

Beyond supporting students, the Ignite Fellowship is reimagining the role of the teacher by empowering veteran educators to rethink traditional approaches to support student learning. Ignite's model encourages a shift from the traditional model of one teacher managing a large classroom, instead creating collaborative environments that foster community and shared responsibility for student learning. Students benefit from the expertise and perspectives of multiple educators rather than relying solely on a single teacher to meet unique learning needs. By providing targeted support to students, Ignite adds much-needed capacity to overstretched teachers, helping them manage their workload and [prevent teacher burnout](#), while ensuring every student gets the attention they need.

For KIPP Wisdom Academy Principal Justin Schulze, Ignite adds capacity to a team of teachers and interventionists, who are limited to how many students they can serve in a day.

"We multiply the power of our reading interventionist at our school with Ignite," shared Schulze, whose St. Louis, Missouri school has been an Ignite partner for 3 years. "When we looked at the results, we found that students were making just as much growth in Ignite as they were in small groups with our reading interventionists. Through Ignite, many more students can be impacted."

Moreover, Ignite fellows are seen as near peers by their students, building strong relationships with them and fostering a sense of belonging and trust. With a cohort of 2,200 college tutors—at least 50% identifying as BIPOC and 40% coming from low-income backgrounds or being the first in their family to attend college—fellows have a unique ability to bond with their students given their proximity in age and shared identity markers. This connection not only makes students feel seen and understood but also enhances their engagement and motivation to learn.

The Ignite Fellowship builds on Teach For America's over 30 years of experience recruiting, developing, and supporting talent, and partnering with communities across the country to help students overcome the systemic barriers to an excellent education. The program serves as a powerful pipeline for the teaching profession, with many tutors inspired to pursue careers in education after experiencing the impact of their work firsthand. During the 2023–2024 academic year, 42% of Ignite fellows who were seniors applied to become Teach For America teachers, with an 83% acceptance rate into the corps.

"Ignite has been an incredible way to introduce college students, particularly Gen Z, to the teaching profession early in their academic journey," said Jemina Bernard, President & Chief Operating Officer at Teach For America. "Through the fellowship, college students experience first-hand the meaningful relationships they can build with young learners, seeing the impact they can have in real-time. This early exposure not only fuels their passion for education but also opens their eyes to the powerful role they can play in shaping the future of our classrooms."

Participating as a tutor in the Ignite Fellowship at the same Los Angeles school she attended growing up inspired Nicolle Echeverria to join the Teach For America corps as a teacher. "Going through the Ignite Fellowship and seeing what TFA believes in—that they have a really deep belief that all students can fulfill their greatest potential when they are given the resources and teachers that really believe in them—that's what moved me to want to join the corps program," shared Echeverria.

As we celebrate National Tutoring Appreciation Week, we are reminded of the transformative impact that personalized support can have on a student's academic journey. This week, and every week, we honor the dedication of tutors and teachers who are helping shape brighter futures and advancing educational equity nationwide.

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About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with communities across the country to expand educational opportunities for children. Founded in 1990, Teach For America finds, develops, and supports a diverse network of leaders who expand opportunity for children from classrooms, schools, and every sector and field that shapes the broader systems in which schools operate. Today, Teach For America is a force of over 70,000 alumni, corps members, and Ignite fellows working in pursuit of profound systemic change so that one day every child has an equal opportunity to learn, lead, thrive, and co-create a future filled with possibility. Teach For America is a proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).