

Chapter 1

Engagement as Intervention: Improving English I STAAR Scores Through Guided Literacy Practice

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Abstract

High schools may rely on tutorial periods to support students who have previously failed the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam. However, these tutorials often rely on lecture, passive practice, or isolated worksheet completion, which are approaches that rarely promote active literacy engagement. This quantitative, quasi-experimental pretest–posttest study examines the impact of implementing guided practice and engaged learning routines in a high school English I tutorial course serving STAAR retesters. Using classroom observations, behavior documentation, attendance patterns, and pre-post assessment data, the study analyzes how instructional shifts relate to performance on the December STAAR retest. Findings suggest that tutorials grounded in modeling, scaffolded practice, opportunities to respond, and collaborative literacy tasks are associated with higher engagement, fewer disruptive behaviors, and stronger assessment performance. Implications for English Language Arts teachers and literacy leaders are discussed, particularly in the design of tutorials that prioritize interaction and meaningful reading and writing practice.

Keywords: state assessment; literacy; guided practice; tutorials; English Language Arts

High school tutorial programs are essential for supporting students who have not met proficiency on state assessments; however, these spaces are often characterized by low engagement and instructional routines that lack meaningful literacy interaction (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Many English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retesters enter tutorial classes with a history of academic frustration and negative associations with reading and writing tasks. When tutorials rely heavily on lecture or independent packet completion, students frequently disengage, exhibit off-task behaviors, or fail to demonstrate progress on required assessments (Cooper, 2014; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Teachers are managing full instructional schedules and large class sizes, and they often lack the time or support necessary to create more interactive and responsive tutorial environments (Shernoff et al., 2016; Wang & Hofkens, 2020). This results in instructional mismatch and contributes to persistent gaps in literacy performance, particularly among students who need the most targeted support (Cooper, 2014).

In Texas, meeting proficiency on the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam is a graduation requirement (Texas Education Agency, 2019), making tutorial programming a central component of secondary literacy intervention. Since the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam measures reading comprehension, textual analysis, and extended writing, it requires students to actively process and analyze the texts, make inferences, and produce evidence-based responses on the written portion. Instructional approaches that position students as passive recipients of information rarely foster the deep engagement necessary for such complex literacy tasks (Moore, 2016; Rosenshine, 2012). Research has long emphasized that adolescents, particularly those with a history of academic difficulty, benefit from instruction that includes explicit modeling of strategic reading,

scaffolded practice with complex tasks, structured discussion and cognitive rehearsal, and frequent opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of what is being taught (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Rosenshine, 2012; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Guided practice and engaged learning routines have been associated with student gains in reading comprehension and in showing more sustained academic engagement as well as with improvements in student performance on formal assessments (Rosenshine, 2012; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012).

Despite this evidence, tutorial periods often remain underleveraged as instructional spaces. Many districts structure tutorials as flexible scheduling periods with large groups of students where teachers have minimal planning time and limited resources for literacy interventions to help students be successful (Shernoff et al., 2016; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012; Wang & Hofkens, 2020). These conditions can unintentionally reinforce teacher-centered approaches, even when teachers recognize the need for more interactive methods. At the same time, students who repeatedly fail the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam frequently experience diminished self-efficacy, avoidance behaviors, and patterns of disengagement (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; McDonald, 1998; Weimer, 2007), and yet, they continue to be placed in the tutorial environments. Without intentional design, tutorials can become extensions of classroom routines that did not work the first time (hence, the repeat testers) rather than opportunities for targeted, responsive intervention to support students in being successful on formal assessments (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on a high school tutorial context where students (N=15) exhibited persistent behavioral challenges, chronic absenteeism, and difficulty engaging with literacy tasks independently. Recognizing that lecture and packet-based approaches were insufficient in

supporting success on the English I in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment, the teacher-researcher redesigned tutorials around guided practice and engaged learning routines. These included modeling cognitive processes during reading and writing, chunking tasks into manageable steps, facilitating small-group collaboration, embedding discussion prompts, incorporating literacy-focused games, and increasing opportunities for students to respond orally and in writing. These instructional activities were grounded in established models of explicit instruction, gradual release of responsibility, and engaged learning. The intervention included modeling cognitive processes during reading and writing (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), chunking complex tasks into manageable steps (Rosenshine, 2012), facilitating small-group collaboration (Moore, 2016; Weimer, 2007), embedding structured discussion prompts (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), incorporating literacy-focused games to promote engagement (Moore, 2016; Weimer, 2007), and increasing opportunities for students to respond orally and in writing to strengthen participation and comprehension (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; Rosenshine, 2012). Overall, the shift to use these strategies aimed to increase student participation, reduce behavior disruptions across all participants, and foster a stronger sense of competence and agency among the retesters.

There are several factors that shaped the need for this redesign. First, the large class sizes and limited administrative support constrained the teacher's ability to provide individualized feedback and adapt lessons for students with varying literacy needs (Dean & Wright, 2016; Rosenshine, 2012). Second, many students had developed externalizing behaviors such as talking during instruction, leaving their seats, or refusing to do the work that appeared directly related to task difficulty or lack of clarity about expectations (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; McDonald, 1998; Weimer, 2007). Third, existing tutorial curriculum materials, which included a packet of a past

exam, lacked the scaffolds necessary for students navigating complex State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading passages or writing prompts (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Texas Education Agency, 2019). These factors collectively created an instructional context where neither the students nor the teacher felt successful in the tutorial class. The redesigned tutorials approach sought to address these barriers through planning and the use of evidence-based literacy routines grounded in explicit instruction, gradual release of responsibility, and engaged learning frameworks (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Moore, 2016; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Rosenshine, 2012).

This study's theoretical foundation also draws on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the zone of proximal development, which states that students learn most effectively when supported by a more knowledgeable other within their zone of proximal development. This is the space between what they can do independently and what they can accomplish with assistance. As a whole, this framework informed the tutorial redesign by emphasizing teacher modeling, peer collaboration, and scaffolded support tailored to students' current literacy levels.

While guided practice and engaged learning have strong empirical support in elementary literacy contexts through experimental, quasi-experimental, and instructional framework research, little is known about their implementation specifically within secondary or English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tutorials (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Rosenshine, 2012). Even fewer studies examine the relationship between tutorial instructional design, student behavior patterns, and assessment outcomes (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by investigating how instructional changes in a real school setting influenced student

engagement and improved performance among English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retesters. The findings offer insight into how secondary English Language Arts teachers can structure tutorial periods to support struggling students more effectively, particularly in high-stakes assessment environments, to help students be successful on formal assessments.

Research Questions

The study addresses three core research questions:

1. How does the use of guided practice and engaged learning in tutorials relate to changes in students' English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores?
2. How do class size and attendance patterns relate to students' performance in an intervention setting?
3. How do behavior patterns during tutorials relate to student outcomes on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a social constructivist framework, which positions learning as a process that develops through interaction, scaffolding, and guided participation (Vygotsky, 1978), and believes that knowledge is constructed as learners engage with tasks, peers, and instructors in structured learning environments. For struggling readers, instructional supports that make thinking visible and provide graduated assistance are particularly critical. Guided practice aligns closely with the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) as it emphasizes movement from teacher modeling (“I do”) to shared practice (“We do”) and ultimately to independent application (“You do”). In literacy instruction, this model has been widely associated with improvements in student comprehension and student confidence,

particularly for learners performing below grade level (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Engaged learning reflects constructivist views of instruction by emphasizing students' active role in constructing their understanding through interaction with the instructional tasks and with one another rather than through passive reception of information (Moore, 2016; Weimer, 2007). Through structured opportunities to participate, learners are supported in developing meaning as part of the learning process, which is a feature that is central to constructivist and engagement-based instruction (Weimer, 2007). For students who have experienced repeated academic failure, this type of engagement has been associated with greater persistence during learning tasks and stronger awareness of strategy use, both of which may support improved academic performance (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Together, social constructivism and the gradual release of responsibility provide a theoretical foundation for examining how guided practice and engagement during instruction influence literacy understanding, student behavior, and participation in high-stakes tutorial settings.

Review of the Literature

Effective tutorial instruction requires more than extended time or repeated exposure to test-preparation material (Rosenshine, 2012; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). For high school students who have repeatedly failed the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam, effective tutorials must emphasize sustained student engagement with literacy tasks and provide structured support for developing strategic reading and writing skills (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Moore, 2016; Rosenshine, 2012). This literature review synthesizes research on (a) the role of engagement in literacy learning, (b) guided practice and modeling as evidence-based instructional routines, (c) independent practice for struggling learners, (d) the influence of class

size, and (e) the impact of challenging behavior. Collectively, these strands provide a foundation for understanding the conditions that support effective intervention in secondary English language arts settings.

The Role of Engagement in Literacy Learning

Engaged learning frameworks emphasize students' active involvement with academic content and with one another through purposeful problem-solving tasks (Moore, 2016; Weimer, 2007). Scholars have argued that learning environments designed to promote structured discussion and collaborative inquiry tend to support deeper cognitive processing and sustained motivation (Moore, 2016; Weimer, 2007). Moore (2016) describes engaged learning as *high-impact* in that tasks require students to apply knowledge, reflect, and interact with others in ways that build ownership and agency. For students in remediation (many of whom may have experienced repeated academic failure), opportunities to participate actively may help rebuild confidence and counter disengagement (Weimer, 2007). Weimer (2007) further suggests that engagement is tied to increased attention and task persistence, which are conditions that are difficult to achieve in silent, worksheet-driven environments. Although the research base specific to engaged learning in high-school English tutorials is limited, broader studies on secondary student engagement offer insights. Dean and Wright (2016) reported an increase in student participation and engagement in large-enrollment lecture courses when collaborative and interactive instructional structures were embedded within instruction. Their findings indicate that engagement-oriented strategies can be implemented effectively even in high-enrollment settings.

Guided Practice as an Evidence-Based Instructional Routine

Lecture remains a common default in classrooms with large enrollments or limited instructional time; however, research suggests that passive listening may be less effective than

more active forms of instruction (Bajak, 2017; Rosenshine, 2012). Bajak (2017) summarizes findings from STEM meta-analyses and notes that student performance tends to improve when learners participate actively rather than listen passively. Although lectures can introduce content efficiently, their utility appears to depend on how much structure and interaction accompany them. Guided practice provides a structured instructional context as it allows teachers to model skills by gradually releasing responsibility to the students throughout the lesson, which may support students' development of reading comprehension and writing strategies; and it scaffolds student attempts to guide them to mastery (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Rosenshine, 2012). McDonald (1997) compares guided practice to independent practice by showing that students often report preferring scaffolded instructional formats and demonstrate greater accuracy when learning new skills under guided conditions. These findings, while not specific to literacy tutorials, offer a rationale for integrating guided modeling into English I remediation environments.

Independent Practice for Struggling Learners

Independent practice remains important for reinforcing skills; however, its effectiveness depends on students' prior understanding of the material (McDonald, 1997; Rosenshine, 2012). McDonald (1997) found that independent practice was as effective as guided instruction only when students had already developed sufficient confidence and foundational knowledge. In literacy tutorials, students often enter with repeated failures on reading comprehension and writing tasks, making unsupported independent practice less likely to result in growth (Fletcher & Frey, 2014; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). For students who have not yet mastered concepts on the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam, such as inference, point of view, tone, or revising/editing conventions, practice passages (Texas

Education Agency, 2019) may highlight misconceptions rather than support improvement. These findings imply that, for students below grade level, independent practice alone may not produce the gains necessary to pass high-stakes assessments (Rosenshine, 2012; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012).

The Influence of Class Size

Although class size research typically focuses on elementary classrooms or collegiate lecture courses, some findings may extend to secondary tutorials. For example, Dean and Wright (2016) argue that large classes require different pedagogical structures and often lead instructors to rely more heavily on lecture. In tutorial environments where students are ideally provided targeted, individualized support, larger class sizes may reduce opportunities for teachers to support students and provide individualized feedback, adjust the instruction, or scaffold learning (Dean & Wright, 2016; Rosenshine, 2012). While smaller tutorial classes are recommended, many high schools face staffing limitations that result in higher tutorial enrollments (Dean & Wright, 2016; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). The literature suggests that instructional shifts where teachers are using structured groups with assigned tasks, implementing or leading guided discussion, and using teacher-led modeling may help mitigate the constraints of larger tutorial groups or classrooms (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Rosenshine, 2012); although, more research is needed to examine these strategies specifically within literacy remediation contexts (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012).

The Impact of Challenging Behavior

Students placed in remediation often exhibit behavior concerns, which may stem from academic frustration, disengagement, or prior negative school experiences (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; McDonald, 1998; Weimer, 2007). Adamson and Lewis (2017) provide evidence that

increasing opportunities for students to respond during instruction can lead to improvements in both academic engagement and behavior. Their findings indicate that when learners participate actively through structured prompts, questions, or collaborative tasks, behavioral disruptions tend to decrease. This relationship suggests that behavior may not simply be an instructional barrier but also a reflection of how well instructional structures support student engagement. For tutorial students who frequently report feeling defeated by repeated State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) failures, instruction that incorporates guided practice and interactive activities (Adamson & Lewis, 2017) may increase participation and reduce off-task behavior.

Across the literature, several themes emerge: passive learning environments may limit opportunities for struggling readers to develop necessary skills (Bajak, 2017; Rosenshine, 2012); guided practice and engaged learning structures frequently support higher levels of participation and reading comprehension (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983); large classes pose structural challenges yet may still benefit from engagement-based instructional approaches (Dean & Wright, 2016; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012); and student behavior appears closely intertwined with instructional design and opportunities for active participation (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; McDonald, 1998; Weimer, 2007). Collectively, these findings suggest that adopting guided practice and engaged learning strategies may be a promising avenue for supporting secondary students who repeatedly fail the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), though additional research is needed to understand these relationships within tutorial settings specifically.

Methodology

This study examined whether shifts from lecture-based tutorial practices toward guided practice and engaged learning were associated with changes in English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) performance among high school students who had previously failed the assessment. A quantitative, quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design was selected because the research questions centered on identifying relationships between instructional approaches, student behavior, and assessment outcomes. Quantitative designs allow researchers to test theoretical assumptions by examining patterns among variables (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design using historical comparison data that compared students’ previous State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores that were earned under lecture-and-packet instruction and with scores earned after a semester of guided practice and engagement-focused instruction. This design aligns with Creswell and Guetterman’s (2019) description of experiments that examine whether exposure to specific instructional conditions is associated with differences in participant outcomes. The instructional shift included increased modeling, structured guided practice, collaborative literacy tasks, and interactive review activities. Prior tutorials for students relied heavily on lecture and independent practice packets from previous English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR; Texas Education Agency, 2019), a structure commonly associated with passive learning environments (Bajak, 2017; Waymouth, 2018). The intervention allowed for a comparison between two instructional conditions for the same students, strengthening internal consistency.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected through convenience sampling, a method appropriate when the researcher works with an existing group that possesses the characteristics needed for the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The sample included 15 high school students enrolled in an English I tutorial course during Fall 2019 at a suburban local high school in Texas. All students had previously failed the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) at least once and were placed in the tutorial based on their prior assessment data. The class represented a typical tutorial group in the district with varied reading levels. Several students were also identified as Limited English Proficient and had diverse behavioral histories. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the tutorial cohort by highlighting the gender distribution and racial/ethnic composition of participating students. This information provides important context for understanding the diverse backgrounds represented in the tutorial setting. The state policy requires remediation opportunities for students who do not meet passing standards (Texas Education Agency, 2019); therefore, the group was representative of the population served in secondary literacy interventions. Table 2 outlines the frequency of students' past tutorial placements. This information helps contextualize the disengagement patterns observed in the study, as repeated failure may shape students' perceptions of tutorials and affect their participation.

Table 1*Demographics by Race/Ethnicity of Tutorial Students*

Variable	Label	N	%
Gender	Male	7	50
	Female	7	50
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian/White	1	6
	African American/Black	10	67
	Hispanic/Latino	4	27

Note. Table 1 presents the demographics of the tutorial students by gender and race/ethnicity. The frequencies (N) represent the number of students in each category, and the percentages (%) reflect the proportion of the total sample (N = 15).

Table 2*Demographics by Individual Student for Number of Times in a Tutorial Class*

Variable	Label	N
Tutorial Placement Count	Student #1	1
	Student #2	1
	Student #3	5
	Student #4	3
	Student #5	-
	Student #6	1
	Student #7	1
	Student #8	-
	Student #9	-
	Student #10	2
	Student #11	1
	Student #12	-
	Student #13	-
	Student #14	1
	Student #15	-

Note. Table 2 presents the number of times each student had been previously placed in a tutorial class (N) before the current intervention. The frequencies (N) represent the total number of tutorial placements recorded for each student. A dash (-) indicates that no prior tutorial placement data were available or that the student had no documented prior tutorial placements.

Context

The study occurred in a large public high school serving approximately 1,173 students. The campus offered daily 30-minute tutorials for students retaking high-stakes assessments. Prior to this study, English I tutorials relied primarily on lecture-based explanations of English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) passages and questions (Texas Education Agency, 2019), along with packet completion by the end of the semester tutorial course. Research suggests that such structures may limit engagement for students who have struggled academically (Dean & Wright, 2016; Moore, 2016). The revised tutorial model integrated guided practice and activities that were designed to increase opportunities to respond, which is an approach associated with reductions in off-task behaviors presented in the research by Adamson & Lewis (2017).

Instruments

Data was collected using two primary instruments designed to capture instructional behaviors and student outcomes: (1) a Tutorial Behavior Observation Checklist and (2) a Student Performance Tracking Log.

Tutorial Behavior Observation Checklist

Behavioral engagement was recorded through a researcher-designed checklist aligned with categories commonly used in observational research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Items included: talking out of turn, refusing work, sleeping in class, using a cell phone, leaving class without permission, and other offenses, which allow the teacher to record notes. Although this is not a formal behavioral inventory, the checklist functioned as a way to consistently measure observable engagement patterns of the tutorial student, and research supports the use of

systematic observation to document student behavior in instructional contexts (Adamson & Lewis, 2017). A sample of the observation checklist is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Tutorial Behavior Observation Checklist

Student	Talking Out of Turn	Refusing to Do Work	Sleeping in Class	Using Cell Phone	Leaving Class Without Permission	Other	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							

Note: This checklist was used to record observable student behaviors during tutorial sessions. Each behavior category represents low-inference indicators of behavioral engagement and disengagement. Observations were recorded by the researcher during instructional activities to document patterns of student participation and off-task behavior.

Student Performance Tracking Log

Student performance was documented through daily logs of assignment completion and student participation in guided practice activities. Since guided practice requires scaffolded attempts and teacher-to-student interaction, a completion-based log offers insight into each student's willingness to engage with the material. Therefore, performance logs served as an informal measurement of learner engagement, which is consistent with studies that track task participation as an indicator of cognitive involvement (Weimer, 2007).

Variables

The primary independent variable in this study was the instructional condition, specifically the shift from lecture and packet-based tutorials to guided practice and engagement-based learning. The dependent variable was students' performance on the December 2019 English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retest and served as the key outcome measure. Supplemental variables included behavioral engagement indicators and assignment completion rates, both of which provided additional context for understanding how students participated in the revised instructional model. Each student's prior English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) score functioned as the control variable and offered a baseline for comparison. This aligned with recommended practices in quantitative educational research that rely on historical performance data to support meaningful interpretation of change (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Procedures

Following Institutional Review Board approval at the district level, parental consent and student consent were obtained. Students were assigned identification numbers, and all data were stored on a password-protected district device to maintain confidentiality. The intervention spanned August–December 2019. During this period, tutorials incorporated guided practice, modeled reading strategies, collaborative discussions, literacy games, and structured response opportunities. During tutorials, guided practice routines followed a consistent instructional cycle.

The first was modeling. The teacher modeled comprehension strategies such as annotating, identifying main ideas, eliminating distractors, and constructing short-answer responses using State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)-aligned passages displayed on a projector (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Next was a shared practice where

students answered selected questions collaboratively and verbalized their reasoning by referencing textual evidence. The teacher provided corrective feedback as necessary. Third, students worked in pairs or small groups of three to analyze short State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) passages, completing sentence stems, and revising constructed responses or the essay portion. This is a guided small-group practice where the teacher is providing scaffolds. Lastly, engagement activities included literacy games such as inferencing challenges, vocabulary matching, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) style multiple choice competitions, and peer-editing rotations for the essay focused on revising introductions and thesis statements (Texas Education Agency, 2019). These strategies were grounded in research from Adamson & Lewis (2017) and Moore (2016), who suggest that active participation and frequent opportunities to respond can support student engagement and academic outcomes.

Following the instructional period for tutorials, students took the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retest in December. Assessment results were later compared with their previous State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) attempts to determine whether changes in performance corresponded with the instructional shift.

Results and Findings

Data analysis looked at two forms of validity evidence: (1) evidence based on test content to consider the alignment between classroom instructional experiences and the literacy skills assessed on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), and (2) evidence based on relations to other variables to examine how changes in test scores corresponded with behavioral and participation patterns (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). As a result, the study utilized historical control data and focused on descriptive comparisons of pre-and posttest

intervention performance. Instead, patterns in students' assessment scores, attendance in tutorials, behavior logs, and assignment completion were reviewed to identify relationships that might suggest how the guided practice and engagement-oriented instruction related to students' performance on the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retest that December.

Pre-intervention State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scale scores and post-intervention December 2019 retest scores were compiled for each participant. Descriptive statistics (means, ranges, and individual score changes) were calculated to examine patterns of improvement following the instructional shift. Individual gain scores were computed by subtracting pretest scores from posttest scores. Attendance percentages, behavioral incident counts, and assignment completion rates were calculated for each student and examined in relation to test score changes. Due to the small sample size and lack of random assignment, inferential statistics were not conducted. Instead, the analysis focused on descriptive comparisons to identify patterns between engagement indicators and assessment outcomes.

Missing Data

Some students had incomplete behavioral or participation data due to the number of absences, their placement in in-school suspension (ISS), or alternative programs. And consistent with recommendations from quantitative research guidelines, these cases were noted but not imputed as their limited participation would have prevented reliable interpretation of the data in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Test Score Patterns

Looking at Table 3, across the sample of 15 students, 9 students (60%) demonstrated an increase in their English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scale

scores from their most recent prior attempt to the December 2019 retest. Gain scores ranged from +2 to +21 points ($M = 9.4$, $SD = 6.8$). Four students (27%) demonstrated no meaningful change (± 2 points), and two students (13%) showed score decreases of more than five points. Therefore, students who regularly participated in class activities, completed assignments, and maintained consistent attendance showed the strongest patterns of score improvement. This trend aligns with research suggesting that increased opportunities for active engagement may support academic performance, particularly for learners with histories of low achievement on the state assessment (Adamson & Lewis, 2017; Weimer, 2007). While not all students achieved passing scores, the descriptive data suggest that participation in guided and interactive lessons corresponded with more positive testing outcomes than previous lecture-based tutorials. As shown in Table 3, students entered the intervention with a wide range of previous State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores and testing histories, which provided a meaningful baseline for comparison. Figure 2 illustrates that most students had attempted the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) at least once ($N=15$) while a smaller subset had tested three or more times ($N=4$).

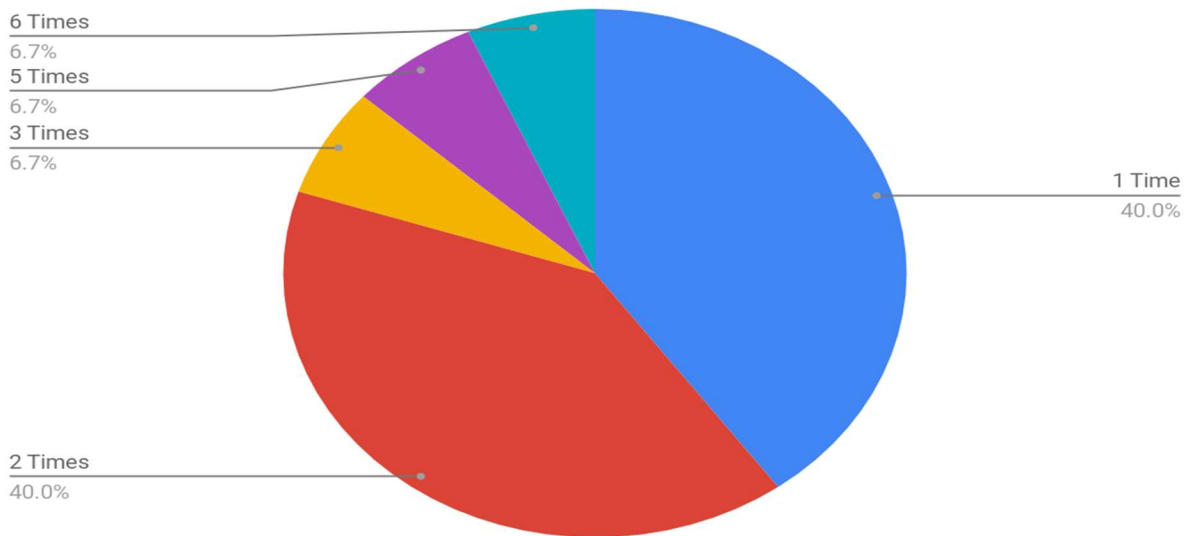
Table 3*Demographics by Individual Student for Number of Times Taken State Test*

Variable	Label	Grade	N	% High	% Low
Times Taken	Student #1	10	2	44	38
	Student #2	9*	2	32	29
	Student #3	12	6	46	24
	Student #4	12	5	32	16
	Student #5	9*	1	25	-
	Student #6	10	2	50	50
	Student #7	10	2	47	46
	Student #8	11	3	41	31
	Student #9	9	1	31	-
	Student #10	11	3	56	35
	Student #11	9	2	38	29
	Student #12	10	1	53	-
	Student #13	10	1	26	-
	Student #14	10*	2	44	43
	Student #15	10	1	51	-

Note. Table 3 presents each student’s grade level, the number of times they previously attempted the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment (N), and the percentage of their highest and lowest scores on the assessment. A dash (–) indicates that no score was reported in the corresponding performance category. An asterisk (*) denotes students enrolled in Grade 9 at the time of data collection who are repeating the grade.

Figure 2

Percentage of Taking State Test



Note: Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of times each student has taken the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment.

Attendance and Access to Instruction

Attendance emerged as a significant contextual factor. As seen in Table 4, students with attendance rates above 80% demonstrated a mean gain of 12.3 points on their English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores compared to a mean gain of 2.1 points among students with attendance below 50%. Similarly, students who completed more than 50% of assigned guided practice activities demonstrated a mean gain of 14.6 points compared to a mean gain of 1.8 points among students who completed fewer than 50% of activities. These students had limited exposure to the instructional model due to the guided practice and engaged learning that are dependent on active participation. Also shown in Table 4, 11 of the 15 students

experienced frequent absences, placement in In-School Suspension or Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs, or removal from tutorials for other school-related activities.

Table 4

Student Individual Performance in Tutorials

Variable	Label	N	%
Present in Class	Student #1	17	53
	Student #2	-	-
	Student #3	26	81
	Student #4	29	91
	Student #5	25	78
	Student #6	31	97
	Student #7	30	94
	Student #8	31	97
	Student #9	1	3
	Student #10	24	75
	Student #11	11	34
	Student #12	32	100
	Student #13	26	81
	Student #14	25	78
	Student #15	6	19

Note. Table 4 reports individual student attendance across tutorial sessions during the intervention period. The frequencies (N) represent the number of sessions attended, and the percentages (%) represent the proportion of the total scheduled tutorial sessions in which each student was present. A dash (–) indicates that attendance data were not available for that student.

Behavioral Engagement

Student behavior and engagement were documented using the Tutorial Behavior Observation Checklist (Figure 1) across tutorial sessions. The observed behaviors included

talking out of turn, refusing assigned work, sleeping in class, leaving the classroom without permission, and inappropriate cell phone use. As shown in Table 5, the frequencies (N) of these behaviors varied substantially across students, with some participants exhibiting minimal off-task behavior and others demonstrating repeated disengagement across sessions. Students with lower frequencies of observed disruptive or disengaged behaviors completed a greater proportion of assigned instructional activities and were more likely to demonstrate score gains on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retest. In particular, the four students with minimal recorded behavior incidents (0–3 incidents across sessions) completed between 67% and 100% of assigned classwork activities and participated regularly in guided practice. On the other hand, students who exhibited higher frequencies of off-task behaviors, such as repeated talking out of turn, refusing assigned work, or inappropriate cell phone use, ranging from 9 to 13 incidents, completed fewer than 50% of assigned activities and participated inconsistently across sessions. Students in this group were also less likely to demonstrate meaningful increases in State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scale scores.

Assignment Completion

Assignment completion rates varied substantially across students (see Table 5). Of the 15 participants, four students (Students #4, #7, #12, and #13) completed at least 50% of the guided practice and engagement-based activities, with completion rates ranging from 67% to 100%. These students also demonstrated the most consistent positive movement in their State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores. The remaining 11 students completed less than half of the assigned activities, with several completing fewer than 25%. Students with completion rates below 50%, particularly those who were frequently absent or placed in In-School Suspension (ISS)/Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), generally showed

little or no change from prior assessment attempts. These patterns of behavior suggest that assignment completion was a key indicator of students' exposure to guided practice routines and their opportunity to benefit from the redesigned instruction, and aligns with prior findings linking participation in scaffolded tasks to improved learning outcomes (Moore, 2016; McDonald, 1997). Even though not all students achieved passing scores, those with higher levels of instructional participation demonstrated greater positive movement in test performance during the intervention period.

Table 5*Student Individual Progress in Tutorials*

Variable	Label	N	%
Behavior Issue/Distracted	Student #1	10	59
	Student #2	-	-
	Student #3	10	38
	Student #4	-	-
	Student #5	4	16
	Student #6	12	39
	Student #7	-	-
	Student #8	9	29
	Student #9	1	13
	Student #10	3	100
	Student #11	5	45
	Student #12	-	-
	Student #13	6	23
	Student #14	13	52
	Student #15	3	50
Class Work	Student #1	7	41
	Student #2	-	-
	Student #3	9	34
	Student #4	29	100
	Student #5	3	12
	Student #6	10	32
	Student #7	20	67
	Student #8	15	48
	Student #9	9	38
	Student #10	-	-

Student #11	-	-
Student #12	32	100
Student #13	20	77
Student #14	3	12
Student #15	3	50

Note: Table 5 reports individual student frequencies (N) and percentages (%) for recorded behavior issues/distractions and completed classwork during tutorial sessions. The behavior percentages reflect the proportion of observation sessions in which off-task behaviors were documented. The classwork percentages reflect the proportion of assigned instructional activities completed during the intervention period. A dash (–) indicates that no incidents or assignments were recorded for that student in the corresponding category.

Discussion

For students’ attendance and access to instruction, they experienced a reduced exposure to the guided practice and engagement-based instruction occurring in the classroom. These students completed fewer than 50% of the assigned activities and participated in a limited number of instructional sessions. In contrast, the four students with consistent attendance completed between 67% and 100% of assigned activities and participated regularly across tutorial sessions. Their performance patterns appeared largely unchanged from previous attempts, and this is consistent with other research noting that access and participation are critical components of engaged learning (Dean & Wright, 2016). For the behavioral engagement, the data indicate a connection between lower rates of disruptive behavior and higher assignment completion and higher formal test performance. This data pattern is consistent with prior findings that link opportunities to respond and active participation with reductions in off-task behavior (Adamson & Lewis, 2017).

Summary of the Findings by Research Question

The three research questions addressed complementary aspects of students’ performance and participation within the redesigned tutorial model specific to the English I State of Texas

Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Research Question 1 examined the relationship between guided practice and changes in State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) performance. The results indicated that students who participated more consistently in guided practice and completed a greater proportion of assigned activities demonstrated the strongest positive gain scores following the instructional shift. Research Question 2 focused on the influence of class size and attendance. Student attendance emerged as a factor, as students who attended more than 80% of tutorial sessions demonstrated higher mean gains than peers with inconsistent participation. This suggests that sustained exposure to instruction was closely associated with performance outcomes. Research Question 3 examined behavioral patterns and engagement. Students with fewer documented behavioral incidents completed more assignments and demonstrated higher mean score gains on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), which showed that behavioral engagement and instructional participation were closely related to literacy outcomes within the tutorial setting.

Limitations

Several limitations constrain the interpretation and generalizability of this study. The sample size was small ($N = 15$) and drawn from a single tutorial class at a high school in Texas, which limits the external validity. The absence of a random assignment and inferential statistical testing restricts causal claims regarding the effectiveness of guided practice. Additionally, behavioral and participation measures were researcher-designed and not validated instruments, which may affect reliability. Lastly, student attendance variability reduced exposure to the intervention for several students. These limitations suggest that findings should be interpreted as exploratory.

Implications for Literacy Instruction in Tutorials

The findings from this study suggest several instructional implications for educators responsible for supporting students who repeatedly fail literacy assessments. Guided practice may provide a more supportive structure for teaching complex reading and writing skills than extended lecture or independent packet work. Implementing engagement-based activities, such as literacy games, collaborative discussions, and modeled strategy practice, may support both academic progress and reductions in disruptive behavior. Monitoring student participation and behavior over a longer period of time may help teachers identify patterns that influence literacy outcomes and adjust instruction accordingly. Attendance and access require planning. Inconsistent participation can limit the effectiveness of otherwise robust instructional practices. Tutorial structures may benefit from incorporating varied engagement strategies, especially for students who have experienced repeated assessment failure and may hold negative perceptions of remediation.

Implications for Future Research

The patterns observed in this study point to several areas for further investigation. Larger-scale studies could explore how different forms of guided practice influence specific literacy skills assessed on the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Also, this study will need a statistical analysis to strengthen the design and to support the conclusions derived. Therefore, additional work could also examine how behavioral supports, classroom structures, or attendance interventions interact with engaged learning approaches in remediation settings. Given the limited research on tutorial classes and retesting populations, this study adds to an emerging area of inquiry that warrants deeper exploration.

Conclusion

Overall, this study examined whether shifting from lecture-based tutorials to a guided practice and engaged learning model corresponded with changes in English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) outcomes among high school retesters. By examining their test performance with tutorial assignment completion, observed student behavior, student attendance, and past progress on the English I State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), this study provides insight into how instructional structure may shape literacy outcomes for students with persistent academic difficulties. Students who participated consistently in guided practice and engagement-based activities during tutorial demonstrated higher score trends on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) retest in December and completed a greater number of assigned instructional tasks through guided practice and support. These students also exhibited fewer behavioral disruptions and more consistent participation across the number of tutorial sessions. Looking at all of the data together, the findings suggest that instructional approaches focused on teacher modeling and scaffolded practice may create more supportive learning conditions than lecture-and-packet formats for struggling secondary readers.

The study also views important implementation challenges. Students with frequent absences or disciplinary placements had limited exposure to the tutorial intervention and demonstrated minimal progress. In the end, this indicated that access to instruction remains a critical factor shaping outcomes. The students' behavioral disengagement further reduced opportunities for some students to benefit from guided instruction. And although passing rates remained limited, the observed patterns suggest that tutorials that emphasize student interaction and provide structured practice may provide more meaningful learning opportunities for students

who have previously struggled with high-stakes literacy assessments. Overall, the findings point to the value of redesigning high school tutorials to prioritize guided practice and sustained student engagement in high-stakes testing contexts.

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