

The Role of AI in High Impact Tutoring - Grant Opportunity

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) is participating in a grant-funded study to **investigate literacy tutoring models**. The investigation collaborates with university partners to use **future teachers as tutors**, which is a purposeful design to impact both striving readers and future teachers. The study examines how high-intensity human tutoring **compares with AI-supported tutoring** and supports Iowa's ongoing efforts to advance literacy and ensure students become **strong readers**.

Partners

The work, in collaboration with [The Reading Institute](#), partners with the University of Chicago as well as the University of California San Diego, Brown University, Bentley University and Valor Institute for Neuroscience and Decision Making. The Reading Institute's (TRI) University Tutoring Collaborative brings together universities from across the country to build and sustain high-impact tutoring using the Reading Ready and Reading Go programs in local schools.

Institutions of Higher Education in Iowa are encouraged to participate in this opportunity and will partner with districts in their area.

Research Funding and Question

- The relevant research question is, "Does constructive engagement with AI tools allow for a reduced role of human tutors in ways that maintain effectiveness and enable tutoring to scale to more students?"
- With a target sample of 2,000 K–12 students in Iowa—500 in each group:
 - 1) AI-only tutoring; 2) Human-plus-AI tutoring; 3) Human-only tutoring; 4) Control across multiple districts
- The project will generate evidence on whether AI-enabled tutoring can be implemented at scale in a cost-effective way that supports long-term literacy gains.
- Phase one grant money has been acquired by University of Chicago from Gracias. The Gracias Grant is a multi-pronged study with a wide team of researchers.
- Current funding covers materials and training to serve up to 1,000 students with human-tutoring in Iowa and the project is seeking additional donors to support expanding the initiative.

Timeline

Spring 2026 – University partners chosen to participate

Summer 2026 – Study design, implementation planning, and training

Fall 2026 – Initial implementation of Randomized Control Trial (RTC)

Spring 2027-28 – Program implementation and expansion

Fall 2028 – Study concludes

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