



## SPEF COVID-19 Helping Hands Initiative

The following summary outlines how funds were used to adapt and deliver programming in response to the challenges of the pandemic.

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SPEF serves approximately 3,000 students and parents. While SPEF offers services for all students, we focus on providing educational resources and support to children at the low end of the opportunity gap. Beginning in March 2020, our programs were adapted to maintain the health and safety of the students and parents we serve, and the volunteers who support us.



Since the outbreak of COVID-19, SPEF has supported multiple initiatives to benefit SPS students. An example of an activity is meal distribution at the schools. In March 2020, SPEF began supporting the Stamford Public School district's **Grab and Go Meals** program. SPEF quickly and effectively organized a roster of volunteers who have assisted by distributing meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) for students throughout our community. From April through September 2020, over 60 SPEF Grab-and-Go Meals volunteers contributed nearly 2,000 volunteer hours helping to distribute 434,000 meals.

In concert with the **Grab and Go Meals** program, SPEF also activated its **Books Across Stamford** program. Our volunteers gave away nearly 1,800 new books at 11 locations during the summer of 2020. In October 2020, SPEF partnered with the Ferguson Library and Stamford Recreation to resume its Books Across Stamford school-year program. With help from 27 volunteers, SPEF distributed 700 new books to more than 200 children in a safe and fun manner.

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In the spring of 2020, SPEF piloted **Home Work Helpers**, which complemented the distance learning initiatives provided by the district. It offered **free** online/interactive academic help for students in elementary school, Monday–Friday. Children received help across all subject areas, including math, English/reading, science, and history. With the launch of the program, more than 50 elementary grade students were paired with SPEF volunteers in fall 2020.





The COVID-19 pandemic also heightened the need for SPEF to expand its tutoring program to support disadvantaged students who have been disproportionately affected by the distance learning education model implemented during this public health crisis. Students from families in which the parent or guardian lacks the bandwidth or competency to support home learning are lacking the additional supports needed to excel academically.

SPEF's **TutorU** Program leverages the agency's professional experience in math tutoring and literacy to bolster tutoring support in math and English. By employing a professional tutor and tailoring a tutoring curriculum uniquely designed to meet the needs of the individual student, SPEF provides one-on-one tutoring sessions to each student participant in TutorU. Sessions take place twice per week with each session focusing on either math or English.

SPEF's Program Director serves as a liaison to parents and teachers to ensure lessons being taught in the classroom are reinforced both at home and in all tutoring sessions. SPEF offers a flexible tutoring schedule with nontraditional hours to meet the availability and learning style of each student participant. SPEF's staff is also equipped to monitor and support the social-emotional needs of each student.

SPEF is hiring tutors based on available funding, with each tutor supporting a case load of fifteen students. Tutors are required to attend a weeklong training consisting of an introduction to curriculum, social-emotional support training, mandated reporter training, etc. Tutors are required to pass an entry exam ensuring their expertise in high school level math and English, participate in a mock tutoring session, and pass a criminal background check. Tutors are required to hold a bachelor's degree. In compliance with SPEF's DEI Action Plan, intentional focus is given to sourcing qualified candidates from protected classes, as defined by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



Additionally, SPEF recently launched its **Here-to-Help** family engagement program. Working alongside the Stamford Public Schools district, SPEF reached out to individual families to assess the resources and/or support services that they needed to enable a student to be successful in either the hybrid learning model or as a member of the Distance Teaching and Learning Academy. Now counselors are reaching out to identify students and families as students return to in-person instruction.

By collaborating with a SPEF Program Coordinator, parents share their issues, concerns, and needs for each of their students. SPEF uncovers and documents these needs, such as technology (laptops, hotspots, Parent Portal/PowerSchool, Google Classroom), transportation, translation, childcare, healthcare, or even something unique and individual. SPEF will monitor the progress of each student and track their progress.