

Mitigating the COVID-19 Learning Loss



Framing the Issue

The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic caused abrupt school closures during the spring of the 2019–20 school year. Educators did their best to provide uninterrupted learning opportunities to students during those closures. However, due to the short notice of the closure and a general lack of experience among educators regarding teaching in an online environment, the quality of education provided during the final months of the school year was not as high as in-person learning. This shift in schooling resulted in learning loss for almost all students. The following student groups were the most likely to experience the negative effects of learning loss: students from families with low socioeconomic status, students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and younger students.



Key Contacts at AIR

Monique Chism
Vice President
mchism@air.org

Veronica Tate
Managing Director
vtate@air.org



Key Takeaways

NWEA reviewed available data and research and published a report summarizing projected learning losses in reading and mathematics for students in Grades 3–8 as a result of COVID-19 interruptions. The report projects that the COVID-19 school closures will result in only 70% of the typical gains of the previous year in reading and only 50% of the expected gains from the previous year in mathematics.

Recommendations for mitigating this loss include the following:

- Policymakers, educators, families, and communities should further their work to provide support to students, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers will need to identify and rely on a wide range of data, including diagnostic assessments, to drive instruction.
- It is important that educators consider the best time to assess students based on need and context rather than adhering to a traditional assessment schedule.
- Use the Connected Learning Model to establish a **culture** that enables students, families, and teachers to have agency and take advantage of what the structure provides.

Connected learning is enabled by a culture that prioritizes social and emotional well-being, supports professional learning, and includes family and community engagement. The model focuses on the following four key tenets:

1. Cultivate caring and equitable learning environments.
2. Use evidence-based practices that attend to social, emotional, and academic growth.
3. Engage in culturally responsive practices.
4. Conduct a needs assessment for social and emotional learning to identify areas of student need.



Resources

NWEA White Paper

- **The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement**
(https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf)

COVID-19 Teaching

- **Four Ways to Support African American Students Through the COVID-19 Emergency**
(http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom_qa_with_larry_ferlazzo/2020/04/four_ways_to_support_african-american_students_through_the_covid-19_emergency.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-FB)
- **Resources and Examples: Learning in the Time of COVID-19**
(<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/issue/covid-19-resources>)

Resources for Culturally Responsive Teaching

- **Online Teaching Can Be Culturally Responsive**
(<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/online-teaching-can-be-culturally-responsive>)
- **Three Research-Based Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies**
(<https://www.nwea.org/research/publication/three-research-based-culturally-responsive-teaching-strategies/>)
- **Using Culturally Responsive Practices to Foster Learning During School Closures: Challenges and Opportunities for Equity**
(<https://www.mathematica.org/commentary/using-culturally-responsive-practices-to-foster-learning-during-school-closures-challenges>)

<https://www.air.org/resource/air-s-covid-19-response-and-resources>



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202
202.403.5000

www.air.org