What the research says about
LOOPING

WHAT IS "LOOPING"?

Looping, a school practice since 1913, is "a policy in which whole classes (or most of the students within a class) are taught by the same teacher in sequential years" (Cistone, et al 2004 in Hill 2018, p. 2). Other names for looping include: "continuous learning," "continuous progress," "persisting groups," "multi-year grouping," "teacher/student progression," "teacher cycling," "teacher rotation" or "persistence teams" (Zarlengo, et al 1997, p. 8).

WHY THINK ABOUT RESEARCH ON "LOOPING"

Asking teachers, students and families to commit to the same classroom make-up for more than one year can be met with excitement and fear by all involved. The purpose, or intended outcomes of looping should be carefully considered. Do schools intend to use loping to improve academic outcomes, relationships, or are there internal or external factors driving the decision?

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT LOOPING?

Research shows that looping has quantitative and qualitative impacts in a school. A current seminal study demonstrates that looping can improve test scores, and the effects are largest for minorities (Hill 2018, p. 2, Franz et al 2010, Cistone et al 2004, Bogart, V. 2002) as well as student attendance and student promotion to the next grade (Cistone, et al 2004). In Daggett's Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework "classroom looping is second on the list of examples of practices to consider" (Beilefeld 2016). Dagget presents looping as a "low-cost, high-effect" approach for an effective modern school and Hitz (2007) agrees also saying looping is not complicated." Looping results in positive school culture through "less transitions" and "increased trust in relationships with students and parents" (Rassmussen, 1998, Chaika 2009). "Schools that have effectively implemented the looping structure point to the following benefits: improved relationships among students and between teachers and students, more efficient instruction, improved attendance rates (5%), reduced student [grade level] retention (43%), fewer referrals of students to special education programs (55%) and improved student discipline (Grant 2017). Staff attendance improved from an average of 7 days absent to an average of 3 days absent (Grant 2017).

PRACTICE TOOLS and RESOURCES

- https://www.waldorfeducation.org/
  Link to the independent school system website which has utilized looping in their schools for over 100 years.
- https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/311/Looping.aspx
  Middle school specific looping research summary
- https://www.teachthought.com/learning/10-pros-and-cons-of-looping-in-education/
  Cited below, this website summarizes the 10 pros and cons of looping in education. This can be used by task forces considering looping as well as by implementers to consider all of the positive and negative factors when beginning to put this initiative in place. Years in a row (Chaika, 2009).

ANNOTATED SOURCE CITATIONS

Bailey, G. J., Werth, E. P., Allen, D. M., & Sutherland, L. L. (2016). The Prairie Valley Project: Reactions to a Transition to a School wide, Multiage Elementary Classroom Design. School Community Journal, 26(1), 239–263. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=116431880&site=ehost-live

- A journal article written in the last 3 years which summarizes parent and teacher perceptions of "school relationships, class-size stability, teacher assignment stability, and student ability" (p.250) during a transition from single-age to multi-age program in two K-5 elementary schools.

Barnum, M. (2018, March 21). Elementary school teachers sometimes follow a class of students from year to year. New research suggests that's a good idea. *Chalk Beat*

- Summarizes the seminal empirical research study of Hill and Jones (2018) in an efficient and accessible article suitable for administrators, teachers and the general public.

Bogart, V. S. (2002). The Effects of Looping on the Academic Achievement of Elementary School Students. East Tennessee State University School of Graduate Studies, (December).

- A dissertation about a comprehensive empirical research study which compares 4th grade students in looped classrooms with 4th graders in traditional classrooms in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. The study concludes that looping designs can have a positive effect on academic achievement for students and explains the conditions under which tho effects happen. Urges educators to consider the benefits of looping that do not show up on standardized tests.

Caauwe, C. M. (2009).The Impact of Looping Practices on Student Achievement. ProQuest LLC, 1–117.

- A dissertation written about research to determine if the practice of classroom looping impacts the academic achievement scores at a Minnesota inner city elementary school. Reading and math academic achievement score comparisons were used based on the Stanford Achievement Test Series 10 (SAT10).The results of this study indicated a statistical significant academic difference in math gain scores between looping students and the non-looping students but not in reading.

Chaika, G. (2009). In the Loop: Students and Teachers Progressing Together. *Education World*, 1–4.

- This is an approachable professional magazine article which summarizes "pros and cons" of looping according to research, quotes teachers who are looping and it uniquely focuses on middle school.

Chirichello, M., & Chirichello, C. (2001). A Standing Ovation for Looping: The Critics Respond. Childhood Education, 78(1), 2–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2001.10521679

- Published qualitative research using case study and parent/teacher surveys to follow the experience of three elementary school students through their experience in joining a looping classroom. The study provides resources that could be utilized by administration and educators who may be considering the implementation of looping, including: surveys, additional resources, and a list of ten recommendations for implementation of looping.

Cistone, P. J., & Shneyderman, A. (2004). Looping: an Empirical Evaluation. *International Journal of Educational Policy*, 5(1, Spring), 47–61.

- Seminal empirical research study (quoted by other seminal research, e.g. Hill,et al 2018) of a large urban school district's implementation of looping and its principals' and teachers' reactions to looping. The results indicated that, with respect to academic achievement, the Looping Sample outperformed their counter- parts in the Matching Sample. Looping had a positive effect on attendance and students in the Looping Sample had a significantly greater chance of being promoted to the next grade. Principals and teachers were in high agreement that looping had a positive effect on student learning in their schools.

Franz, D. P., Thompson, N. L., Fuller, B., Hare, R. D., Miller, N. C., & Walker, J. (2010). Evaluating Mathematics Achievement of Middle School Students in a Looping Environment. *School Science & Mathematics*, 110(6), 298–308.

- An empirical research study which compares 6th-8th grade student achievement on standardized math assessments in looped versus non-looped settings. The study concludes that students in looped setting performed better on standardized math-assessments, particularly in the first year of the looping.

Grant, J. (2017). In the Loop. *The School Superintendents' Association* online journal feature.

Harper, A. (2018, March 23). Brief: New study highlights the benefits of looping in the elementary grades.*Education Dive*.

Hill, A. J., & Jones, D. B. (2018). A teacher who knows me: The academic benefits of repeat student-teacher matches. *Economics of Education Review*, 64(October 2017), 1–12.

- Recent seminal published empirical research which finds "small but significant test score gains for students assigned to the same teacher for a second time in a higher grade."

Hitz, M. M., Jenlink, C. L., & Somers, M. C. (2007). The Looping Classroom. YC: Young Children, 62(2)(March), 80–84.

- A professional magazine article written for the average reader to summarize looping and multi age definitions, research and pros provides.

Teach Thought Staff (2017, August 28). 10 pros and cons of looping.

- A brief and accessibly-worded summary of 5 pros and 5 cons of looping which are consistently represented in research on looping. Best for school staff or public groups prior to considering implementation of looping.

Walker, K. (2004, June 12). Looping: A Research Brief. *The Prinicipal's Partnership*.

- This is an executive summary 4 page research brief written for school principals. One paragraph is about the definition of looping, 1 page lists in bullet form the pros and cons of looping and includes a list of resource links.

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