



The New York State Office of Religious and Independent Schools

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE CENTER (PDRC)**

*The Upstate PDRC – All NYS Regions North of NYC*

# **Looping: A Quick Guide**

Look for more Quick Guides on  
the Upstate PDRC website:

<https://www.nysed-soris-upstate-pdrc.org/>

# Goals of this Guide

- **What** is looping, and what makes it a promising practice?
- **Why** are schools looking at looping as one of many possible responses to Covid-19?
- **How** can looping be implemented?

# Would you...

...get a new pediatrician or dentist for your child every year?

...choose to replace the teachers, administration and support staff in your school every year?

# What is looping?

**Looping** -- also known as *multi-year teaching* or *multi-year placement* -- occurs when a teacher is promoted with his/her students to the next grade level and stays with the same group of children for two or three years.

**RESOURCE:** [In the Loop: Students and Teachers Progressing Together](#)

# What looping is not...

Looping is not the same as **multi-age classrooms**. The class is typically composed of one grade, which stays together for the next grade (or beyond).

*Montessori schools* are based on multi-age groupings that stay with the same teacher until the cohort moves up to the next age-group.

RESOURCE: [Multi-Age Classrooms—A Hallmark of Montessori](#)

# So why isn't looping the norm?

## Cause:

The post-WWII “baby boom” initiated a huge change in American education.

Smaller schools began getting consolidated into larger ones, the idea of a separate teacher for each grade level became an expectation for many parents and students.

## Effect:

A teacher for each grade level has become so common that often teachers are defined by the grade level they teach: "He's a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade teacher;" "She's a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher."

Because many elementary school teachers spend all or most of their careers assigned to one grade level, **they tend to be thought of as specialists in that grade level rather than as specialists of teaching children.**

**Looping requires a paradigm shift.**

# Looping Report Card

Teachers who practice looping report:

- the promotion of stronger bonds between parents and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students;
- greater support for children who need stabilizing influences in their lives;
- a greater knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing for increased opportunities for teachers to tailor curriculum to individual needs;
- increased opportunities for shy students as well as others to develop self-confidence;
- reduced anxiety about the new school year; and
- a gain of almost a month of teaching time from the second year on, when the typical transition period at the beginning of the year is virtually unnecessary.

**RESOURCE:** [Wire Side Chats: In the Loop: Students and Teachers Progressing Together](#)

# Why: meeting social-emotional needs

**RESOURCE:** [National Association of School Psychologists](#) webinar: "School Re-entry Considerations: Supporting SEL and Mental Health Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic"

"There is a level of trust that can only be built up over time. They feel comfortable talking to me as a trusted mentor, and will often even share stories that most students would not typically share with their teacher. We have developed a high level of caring and respect in our classroom."

**RESOURCE:** [10 Pros And Cons Of Looping In Education](#)

"Despite all the fancy hardware, the single most effective violence-prevention strategy is the physical presence of a caring adult."

--Ronald D. Stephens, director of the National School Safety Center

**RESOURCE:** [American Association of School Administrators](#) article: "In the Loop"



# Why: more instructional time

What will be the academic fall-out of the switch to emergency remote teaching, and who will be the most effected? A Brown University study projects that students will start the new school year with an average of 66 percent of the learning gains in reading and 44 percent of the learning gains in math, relative to the gains for a typical school year.

Students living in poverty, students of color and special populations are predicted to have experienced more learning loss than those who were able to regularly access remote learning.

**RESOURCES:** [Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement](#)

[Covid-19's Impact on Students' Academic and Mental Well-Being](#)

# The cost of lost time

Research shows the shift to remote learning could set the average student seven months behind academically, according to a McKinsey [analysis](#).

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#>

Link to Axios'

**Pandemic's lost years (above article taken from this)**

[https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-damage-education-economy-6120f95a-46a9-46af-89df-81d4af20c0d6.html?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_axiosam&stream=top](https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-damage-education-economy-6120f95a-46a9-46af-89df-81d4af20c0d6.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosam&stream=top)

# Why: the second-year benefits

According to a recent study covered by Chalkbeat:

“Looping causes student test scores to improve slightly after the second year, and the benefits of looping are greatest for students of color.”

**RESOURCE:** [Elementary school teachers sometimes follow a class of students from year to year. New research suggests that's a good idea.](#)

"September 1 of the second year of looping is the 181st day of school for those in the class," says Jim Grant, who directs the Society for Developmental Education and co-directs the National Alliance of Multiage Educators.

**RESOURCE:** [Looping](#)

# Why: cost-effective, high-impact

While some interventions spend valuable resources and can be difficult concepts to implement, looping is cost-effective. A two-year looping cycle requires only two teachers from consecutive grade levels to exchange grade levels every year.

The Center for Leadership in Education lists looping as the **second-most** high-impact/low-cost intervention (technology is **3rd** on the list).

**RESOURCE:** [Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework](#)

# Why: benefit to school climate

“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, higher attendance rates, reduced student retentions, fewer referrals of students to special education programs and improved student discipline.”

**RESOURCE:** [American Association of School Administrators](#)

# Common parent concerns

“What if I get stuck with a bad teacher for two (or more) years?”

“What if there is a personality conflict between my child and the teacher?”

“What if the class is dysfunctional?”

# Common teacher concerns

“How am I supposed to master the curriculum for both years?”

“I will need additional training and materials. Is there support for this?”

“What if the class is dysfunctional?”

**RESOURCE:** [What is 'Looping' in Education?](#) for a teacher's perspective

# Response from the research

“Looping is especially beneficial for teachers who are performing lower overall, suggesting that **familiarity with students can help the teacher improve.**” <https://www.educationdive.com/news/new-study-highlights-the-benefits-of-looping-in-the-elementary-grades/519743/>

“Overall, our findings indicate that there may be potential low-cost gains from the policy of “looping” in which students and teachers progress through early school grades together, and may explain the recent experimental evidence that **teacher specialization has negative effects on student achievement** given that this likely decreases student-teacher familiarity.” <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775717306635>

“Eighty-four percent [*of looping middle school teachers*] felt that it resulted in **better classroom discipline**, 80 percent said the students got to know one another better, 95 percent said they felt they knew their students better, and 80 percent said they now could avoid unnecessary duplication from previous years.” [https://www.educationworld.com/a\\_issues/issues055.shtml](https://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/issues055.shtml)



# How: implementation of looping

“For looping to work, two teachers must have the desire and freedom to leave one grade level, proceed with the students to the next grade, and then return to their initial grade level to repeat the looping cycle.”

“To implement looping well requires an effective teacher, plus support from the administration, the teachers’ union and parents of the students enrolled in the looping classroom.”

--Jim Grant, Society for Developmental Education  
author of “The Looping Handbook”

# How: the Waldorf model

Looping was initially advocated by early 20th-century Austrian educator Rudolf Steiner. Despite success in European schools, looping is still considered innovative in the U.S.

RESOURCE: [Looping at a Waldorf School, Teaching the Same Students Year after Year](#)

# How: the established model in public and non-public schools

- short loops at key transition points (1st-2nd, 6th-8th)
- paired teachers
- volunteerism

**RESOURCES:** [What is 'Looping' in Education?](#) --middle school

# Key takeaways

- Looping has been around for a long time, and the evidence supports the efficacy of long-term relationships for improving student outcomes and increasing job satisfaction of teachers

**RESOURCE:** [Teacher Looping Improves Student Outcomes](#)

- There are documented benefits to looping, but the “cons” need to be considered and addressed. Cons considered here:

**RESOURCE:** [10 Pros And Cons Of Looping In Education](#)

- “Looping makes it easier for certain positive outcomes to happen, but looping doesn’t cause them to happen.” More on **potential** gains:

**RESOURCE:** [American Association of School Administrators](#)



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Let us know what **you** need on the "1:1 Support" page of our website.

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