



Research Brief

Looping

Question: What are the benefits of looping?

Summary of Findings: Looping was defined as students staying with the same teacher(s) for at least two years, although it can be extended up to four years. In the United States, looping has been done mostly at the elementary level and more is being implemented at the middle school level. There was one reference to looping being done at one high school, however, with further research, it appeared that the program was no longer in existence. Looping is a common practice in Germany, Denmark, and Asia. In Asia, it is done at the high school level where the students have the same content area teacher for four years.

"The essence of looping is the promotion of strong, extended, meaningful, positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students that foster increased student motivation and, in turn, stimulate improved learning outcomes for students" (Looping: Adding time, strengthening relationships). There was no hard evidence supporting academic growth, however, there were many references that stated by providing a safe learning environment, students were bound to do better academically. One student survey stated that students felt well prepared for their future. The data did suggest that attendance was better and discipline referrals were fewer for those students who had been in a looping situation versus those who had not.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

Pros for students

- Less apprehension at the beginning of the subsequent school years because the teachers, students, and expectations are already known.
- Learning is more personalized.
- More support of the individual.
- Continuity in the academic program.
- Shyer students may feel more comfortable to take risks.
- More opportunities for interdisciplinary approaches to the curriculum.
- More time for slower students to gain concepts and skills.
- Opportunities for deeper relationships to develop with teachers and other students.
- Possible opportunities for summer work and study.

Cons for students

- A poor match with the teacher and/or other students.
- Students know each other too well and that may impede learning and/or social interactions.
- May be harder for new students to fit in with a group who have been together over an extended period of time.

Pros for teachers

- Can save up to a month in instructional time beginning in the second year because they know what was been covered academically and they are familiar with the students' personalities.



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- Know students' strengths, areas for growth, and learning styles.
- Continuity of the instructional program.
- Work with other teachers who have the same students to develop interdisciplinary and/or integrated units of study.
- Develop deeper relationships with students and parents.
- More easily designed curriculum can be done because the prior knowledge of the students is known.
- More opportunities to help students with special needs who can be included in the regular instructional program.
- The teachers of special education students know the expectations of the teachers and can be better prepared to meet the needs of the students in the course.

Cons for teachers

- A poor match with a student.
- Students know each other too well and that may impede learning and/or social interactions, which would make classroom management more challenging.
- Unable to design interdisciplinary and/or integrated units of study due to lack of common planning time.

Considerations for Implementation

- Research and establish the needs of the students and how the program will meet their needs.
- Examine and discuss the available research, literature, and existing programs.
- Staff should design and develop the program.
- Use teacher volunteers to staff the program. Do not use new and inexperienced teachers.
- Solicit support of the central office and community.
- Educate the parents about the program.
- Notify parents in advance and allow them to decide if they want their child in a looping or non-looping program.
- Provide on-going and appropriate staff development.
- Provide access to materials to support the program and curriculum.
- Provide consistent common planning and preparation time for the teachers.
- Balance the students heterogeneously.
- Keep track of attendance, discipline referrals, and grades.
- Evaluate the program and make modifications as necessary.

Online Resources:

- Breaking Ranks: A Framework for Secondary Reform Project
This article provides the major themes that are present in Breaking Ranks and the process for its implementation.
http://www.alliance.brown.edu/programs/lab2000/secondary_breaking.shtml
- High School Reform (registration required)



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Summaries from several surveys regarding the differences in perception and achievement between large, small, rural, and urban settings are presented in this article. It makes the case for schools within schools.

<http://www.teachermagazine.org/context/topics/issuespage.cfm?id=115>

- **Implementing Looping**
Detailed lists of reasons to loop and not to loop along with considerations for implementation are provided.
<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest123.html>
- **Looping**
A brief definition of looping, along with some its benefits are given in this article.
<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/instretn/in5lk10.htm>
- **Looping: Adding Time, Strengthening Relationships**
This article provides a definition along with the pros and cons of looping. It briefly describes looping practices in Europe.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/1998-2/looping.htm>
- **Looping for Better Performance in the Middle Grades**
This article reviews advantages and disadvantages of and considerations to be taken into account prior to implementing looping.
http://www.nmsa.org/services/msj/msj_march2002.htm
- **Reinventing America's Schools**
The Danish system of looping compared to the American system is described in this article.
<http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0305wag.htm>

Human Resources

- **Jane Berger**
She was the coordinator of the high school in Battle Creek, Michigan that did looping.
iberger@battle-creek.k12.mi.us
- **Dr. Sue Thorson**, Associate Professor, University of Maine, Farmington
She taught in two different high school looping programs in Europe.
thorson@maine.edu



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Submitted By: Dr. Karen Walker, University of Maine, Farmington

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