

Resources for Reconnecting and Accelerating Student Learning

By Kelly Stuart | Categories: Reading Intervention and Acceleration, Social-Emotional Learning

Educators face unprecedented challenges ahead. While schools and families have gone to extraordinary lengths to support their students during the COVID-19 crisis, there has been a variance of offerings across the country. The recent research report from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), “**The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement,**” highlights that students may lose between half to a full year of achievement growth.

While there are needs in every grade level, elementary school students are especially vulnerable to learning loss in critical literacy skills. Students in grades K–2 who need explicit systematic instruction are likely missing out on mastering foundational skills, while interventions for older readers (grades 3–5) are not intense enough to meet student needs exacerbated by school closures. In addition, many students do not have access at home to the volume of reading or writing materials they need to be proficient readers and writers. Finally, as we talk to educators, we hear about the significant trauma that they, along with their students, are experiencing during this unprecedented time.

We at Pivot Learning, CORE, and Center for the Collaborative Classroom have taken this time to examine our own practices with a critical eye, looking for ways to better equip educators with the tools and support they need to connect with a diverse student population that has been adversely affected by school closures. When we look ahead, we understand school will likely look different in ways we cannot even imagine.

To support our educator partners, we offer guidance and resources that can be used over the summer and taken into the fall to support students both academically and socially. Here is what we believe is essential for making sure our students don't fall behind.

Ensure students feel calm and connected so that real learning can occur. As educators and children come back together (either virtually or in person), attending to social-emotional needs will be essential for deep learning to occur. Collaborative Classroom's research on social and emotional learning (SEL) demonstrates that children's sense of connectedness among their peers and with their teacher is vital to their overall well-being and academic success. We have learned from our own work alongside teachers that connection, or a sense of belonging, is the basis of student engagement.

Over the summer and into the fall, it is critical that districts explicitly reconnect with students, reinforce relationships, and identify ways to support their social and emotional needs. Over the summer, Collaborative Classroom will make lessons available and share best practices that can be used in person or virtually to support this process.

Focus on foundational skills in the early grades. As we have engaged with our district partners, a commitment to using research-based approaches is top of mind. Fortunately, K–2 literacy—an area of much current interest in education news reporting—has an abundance of research we can draw upon. Dr. Louisa Moats recently explained in an interview with Collaborative Classroom that the body of work referred to as the “science of reading” is not an ideology, a philosophy, a political agenda, a one-size-fits-all approach, a

program of instruction, nor a specific component of instruction. It is the emerging consensus from many related disciplines, based on literally thousands of studies, supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages.

These studies have revealed a great deal about how we learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and the kind of instruction that is most likely to work the best for the most students. In a recent video, Linda Diamond, president of CORE, describes the powerful research base behind the science of reading.

Support teachers in understanding the needs of their students. Understanding where children are on their reading continuum will allow teachers to quickly begin targeted, intentional instruction. CORE is making available two assessments from their Multiple Measures assessments to support teachers in understanding their students' strengths and next steps. The two assessments are:

1. The Phonological Segmentation Assessment, which contains three parts that are arranged in difficulty: sentence segmentation, word and syllable segmentation, and phoneme segmentation.
2. The Phonics Survey, which assesses the phonics and phonics-related skills that have a high rate of application in beginning reading. Each survey has two sections: "Alphabet Skills and Letter Sounds" and "Reading and Decoding Skills." The sections are further divided into parts. Some of the parts contain lines of both real words and pseudowords for the student to decode. Pseudowords, or made-up words, are included because students cannot have memorized them and therefore must use decoding skills to correctly pronounce these words.



Support teacher learning. Supporting teachers with professional learning will be essential to accelerating needs-based student learning.

An excellent and cost-effective way to support professional learning for teachers is to enroll in an upcoming Online Elementary Reading Academy Course facilitated by CORE. This course provides teachers with robust training on foundational skills and instructional practices based on the science of reading to teach all learners, including English learners and those with dyslexia, to be strong readers.

Another approach to professional learning is to adopt a curriculum that both meets the needs of students and builds teacher expertise in foundational skills. In the interview with Collaborative Classroom, Dr. Louisa Moats shares what educators should look for in a program:

First, ideally, there should be explicit instruction in foundational skills for approximately 45 minutes daily that follows a lesson routine: review, explain the concept, provide guided practice, provide more (independent practice); spell and write to dictation; read decodable text.

Then, determine if the instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, and text reading is informed by knowledge of both

the speech-sound system and the orthographic system.

Third, examine the scope and sequence for order and pacing of concept introduction. Intervention materials should be aligned with [Tier I] classroom instructional materials but provide more intensive practice.

AVOID any program that includes drawing shapes around words, making alphabetic word walls, teaching the “cueing systems” approach of appealing to context to guess at unknown words, or that does not follow a clear scope and sequence where one skill is built upon another.



Collaborative Classroom's *SIPPS* (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words) program, used as both foundational instruction and intervention, meets Dr. Moats' description of an ideal program. *SIPPS* is a research-based program with proven outcomes that focuses on acceleration and mastery.

Examples of districts that have seen improved student reading results with *SIPPS* include Pajaro Valley Unified School District in Watsonville, California and Greeley-Evans School District in Colorado.

Pajaro Valley Unified developed a strong system of support focused on getting all children to grade level by third grade and has continued this work during COVID-19 distance learning. Collaborative Classroom recently spoke with their superintendent, Dr. Michelle Rodriguez, to learn more about their instructional approach before and during COVID-19. Greeley-Evans School District focuses on pairing student motivation with *SIPPS* instruction to accelerate students in the upper elementary grades.

SIPPS pairs its proven foundational skills curriculum with professional learning and practice opportunities that are embedded in the lessons and available online. In response to the current situation, we are gathering information on effectively teaching *SIPPS* remotely and will provide learning opportunities this summer to support teachers of *SIPPS*.

Support teacher wellness. These last two months have presented educators with unprecedented challenges, and we want to acknowledge the amazing, hard work we have witnessed from our district partners. The care you have shown to your students while working in challenging circumstances is truly awe-inspiring. Please find time to take care of yourself. To that end, our colleague Sarah Rosenthal is writing a series on teacher wellness. We hope you will find it useful.

Below is a list of resources mentioned in this blog:

1. NWEA report
2. Interview with Louisa Moats
3. Video of CORE's Linda Diamond talking about the science of reading
4. CORE's Multiple Measures Assessment
5. Online Elementary Reading Academy Course

6. Pajaro Valley *SIPPS* success story
7. A Greeley-Evans instructional coach's experience with *SIPPS*
8. Supporting All Readers Before and During COVID-19: A Conversation with Pajaro Valley Superintendent Michelle Rodriguez and Linda Diamond of CORE
9. "Best Practices for Teaching *SIPPS* Remotely" blog
10. Teacher Wellness blog series

About Pivot Learning

Pivot's mission is to partner with educators to design and implement solutions to their greatest challenges in achieving educational justice in areas including curriculum implementation, special education reform, and secondary school redesign.

About CORE

The Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education (CORE) works with school leaders to design and implement a customized, multi-year professional learning plan that includes a combination of workshops, job-embedded professional learning, curriculum implementation, and support so that evidence-based instruction takes root and leads to lasting change. We are the authors of the nationally recognized textbooks, *Teaching Reading Sourcebook* in a new 3rd edition and *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures*, newly revised, and developers of the highly effective *Spend Some Time with 1 to 9* supplemental math program.

About Center for the Collaborative Classroom

Our mission as a nonprofit is to help students grow as readers, writers, and thinkers while they develop the social and emotional skills necessary to thrive. Founded in 1980, Center for the Collaborative Classroom conducted seminal research on social development. Collaborative Classroom has evolved into a partner for schools and districts that is dedicated to transforming the school experience, developing students, and empowering teachers as they engage students.