

## TEACHING

# 'Looping' With Students: When It Works and When It Doesn't



By [Hayley Hardison](#) — June 01, 2022 ⌚ 5 min read



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“Looping”—the practice of matching students with the same teacher for two years (or more) in a row—has been around for decades. Could it be a solution for accelerating student learning and rebuilding student-teacher relationships after all the schooling disruptions caused by the pandemic?



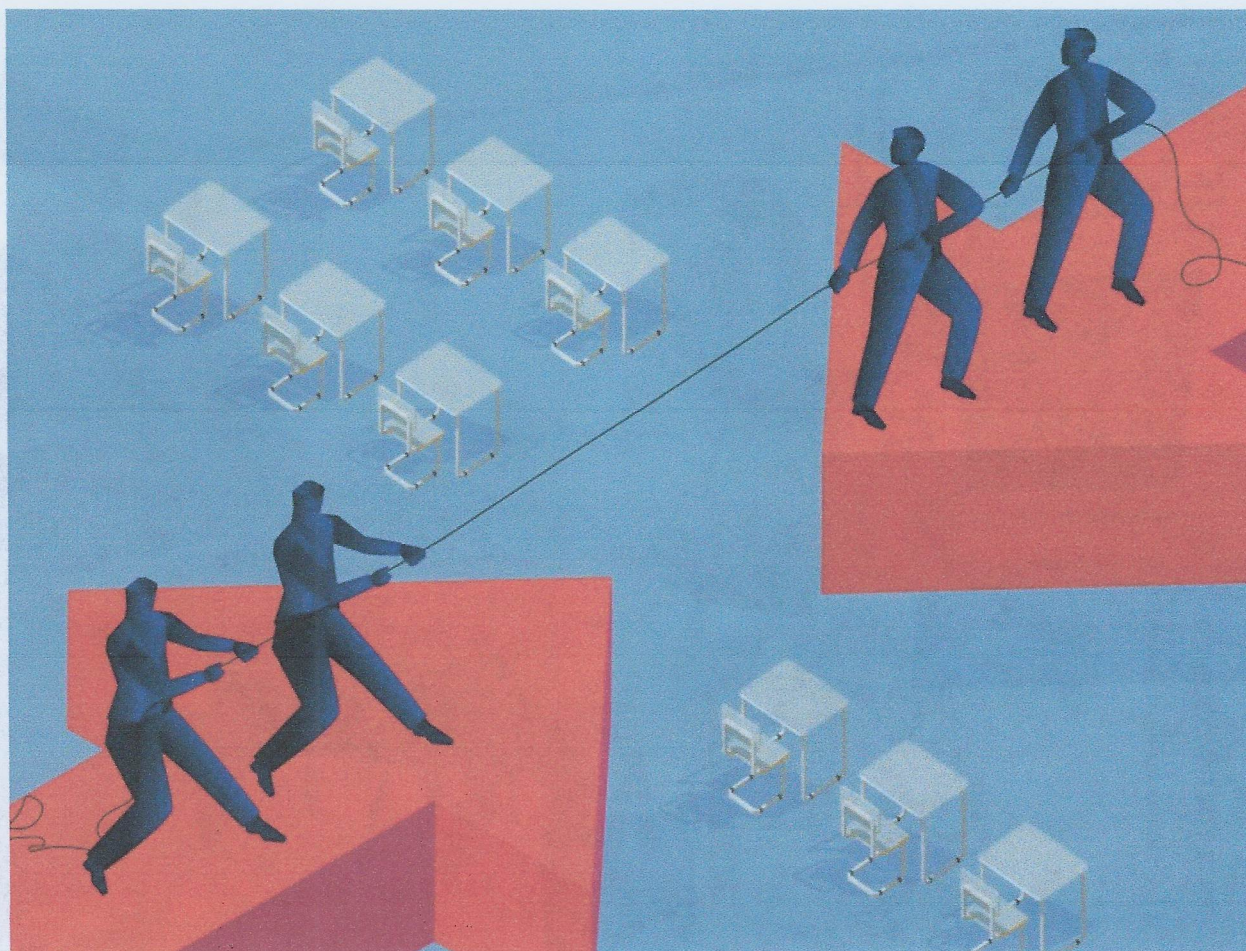
On social media, teachers give mixed reviews of the practice. Some see it as *the* cost-friendly solution to improving student-teacher relationships and minimizing learning loss across grade transitions. Others consider it impractical without an opt-out choice when students and teachers don't mesh or with the wrong mix of students.

In a nationally representative survey administered at the beginning of the pandemic, 54 percent of teachers supported looping as a strategy to address learning loss resulting from the sudden shift to remote learning. A 2018 study suggests the teachers who favor the practice may have a point. It found that looping with elementary students resulted in improved student test scores, with the benefits being greatest for students of color.

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Likewise, a LinkedIn poll directed at teachers who have looped with students found that 79 percent described their experience as favorable, 16 percent reported it was neutral, and 5 percent said it was negative. Across multiple social media posts, educators shared their first-hand experiences looping with students. Here's what they had to say:

**'Students came in ready to learn'**



Many teachers found that having students for two years or more allowed them to build up momentum and hit the ground running in the next year.

“SO rewarding! I was able to know each child on a different level, know how those children learn best and how to challenge/stretch their thinking. It gave me the ability to appreciate each child’s learning journey and grow with them... I highly recommend this experience! I have done it twice in my career and have seen/lived a valuable journey filled with appreciation, love, and support.”

—Claire DeLaurentis

“I loved everything about looping! We gained so much time because relations were previously established with students and parents. Processes, procedures, rules, expectations carried over from the previous year. Students came in ready to learn and I entered a year full of energy, understanding of my students’ abilities, and able to pick up where we left off the prior year.”

—Laura McKean

“When I was multi grade teacher in a very small very rural school, I taught gr 6-7-8. Had same kids for 3 years... I sort of felt bad for kids who were stuck with me for all that time...but honestly? We just got to really build an efficient system together: we knew when to work and when to play. We knew each other’s learning and teaching styles and managed to get stuff done so we had so much time for lab work, special projects, field trips, etc. AND... scores on those dreadful standardized tests were even up! It was amazing to [see] such progress; students recognized it too, and seeing their own growth was incredibly motivating!”

—Karen Ellert Garber

“[I]t was great to ‘hit the ground running’ the second year of instruction. 100% of my students met their NWEA MAP Reading Growth Target in May of my final year - this includes Special Education and EL students.”

—Christine M. Reinders

“I have looped in two school districts with marginalized students. Looping is so powerful! The relationships that you build with student and families are lifelong. I wish all schools would consider this powerful move.”

—Cherri Schrick

**‘I see the positives and negatives’**



Some teachers noted both challenges and rewards they experienced when looping.

"I have taught double grades for 19 years. It has many advantages, but can have disadvantages too. It is nice that they know the expectations and the routines. I know what they enjoy and what they don't. Sometimes I get a challenging child, but I never had one that didn't like me at all. They just needed love, understanding, and boundaries. I love how I can pick up where they are in their academics and see them grow."

—Rachel Ann Swillum

"For the most part, my experience was positive, however, many of my challenging students made the year almost miserable. They were too comfortable with me and felt like they should get away with everything they wanted to. I see the positives and negatives of looping, for sure."

—Janalie Youngblood

"I suppose it depends on the teacher. I actually didn't like it as much as I thought I would. I had a great class the first year and the transition was seamless rolling into year two. However, the students got too comfortable. They also got annoyed with each other and sometimes with me. Overall, it's a good thing as a teacher can better serve the students. However, be prepared in year two as the 'honeymoon' definitely wears off. 😊"

—Neil Konitshek

## **'Give students different experiences each year'**

Some educators expressed a dislike of looping.

"We tried looping one year and the teachers did not like having the same kids two years at all!"

—Shannon Titshaw Ed.S.

"In general, I feel it is important to give students different experiences each year. It helps us as people to learn to adapt to new situations, expand our learning styles, and develop new relationships (both with adults and peers.)"

—Eric Deeter

## **Band teachers already loop**



Commenters also pointed to an existing area of education where looping often occurs naturally: electives. Elective teachers spoke to their experiences as educators who often have recurring student groups.

“As an elective teacher, this is one of the best parts of the job! I keep the same students for many years in a row, so I get a great sense of their strengths, weaknesses, and really get to know them!”

—[Kayla Davila-Meek](#)

“Formal name for what I’ve done for 27 years as an orchestra teacher. When one of my students passed away during her senior year, my principal remarked that I’d worked with her for four years. I corrected him. ‘No, sir. I’ve worked with her for seven.’ I help with the transition from middle to high school. My students see me almost [everyday] for up to seven years. That’s a lot of trust, understanding, and love. The education comes easily with that mixture.”

—[Christi L. Lewis](#)

## A potential solution to challenges

Some commenters proposed that giving students and/or teachers choices in looping scenarios could help mitigate the potential challenges.

“When I was younger, I had really excellent teachers and then not so great teachers. When school years were over, I was so thankful to be out of teachers’ classes when I had negative experiences. Perhaps offering an option to opt out if you don’t mesh well with the teacher or they do not adequately teach to your strengths!”

—[Emily Crum](#)

“Only if the student/teacher relationship is positive. There should be a choice for families to do so.”

—[Dr. JoAnn DeStefano Cardillo](#)



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Hayley Hardison is a social media producer for Education Week.

