



# Universal Benefits of School Programs that Bolster Behavioral Health and Educational Success

Congressional Briefing 4/19/2023

Mark J. Van Ryzin  
University of Oregon

### Greater Levels of Anxiety

57%

Reported Anxiety

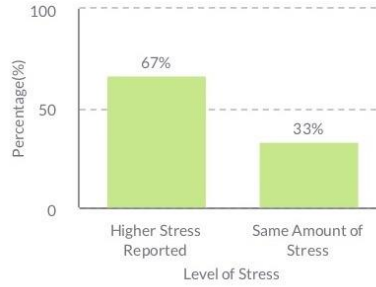


Those with Greater Amount of Anxiety (57%)  
 Those with the Same Amount of Anxiety (43%)

### Higher Levels of Stress

67%

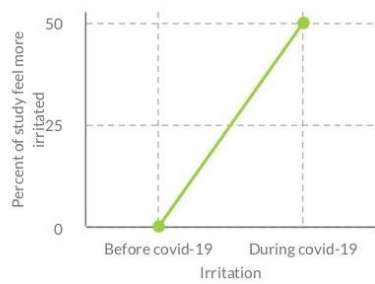
Level of Stress



### Increased Irritability

50%

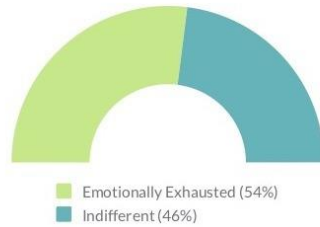
Increase in Irritation



### Increase in Emotional Exhaustion

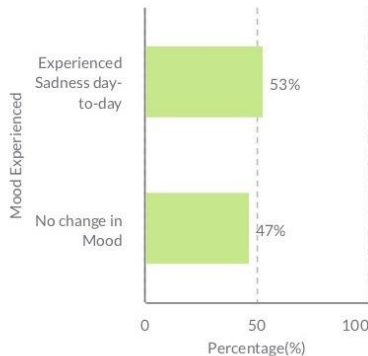
54%

Emotional Exhaustion Since Covid-19



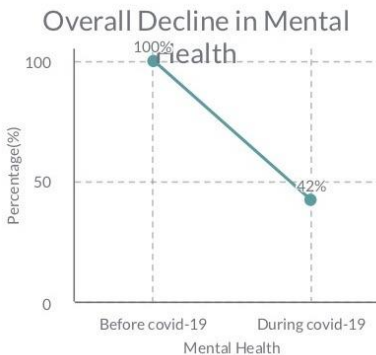
### Sadness Experienced day-to-day

53%



### Overall Decline of Mental Health

42%



# Mental Health During the Pandemic

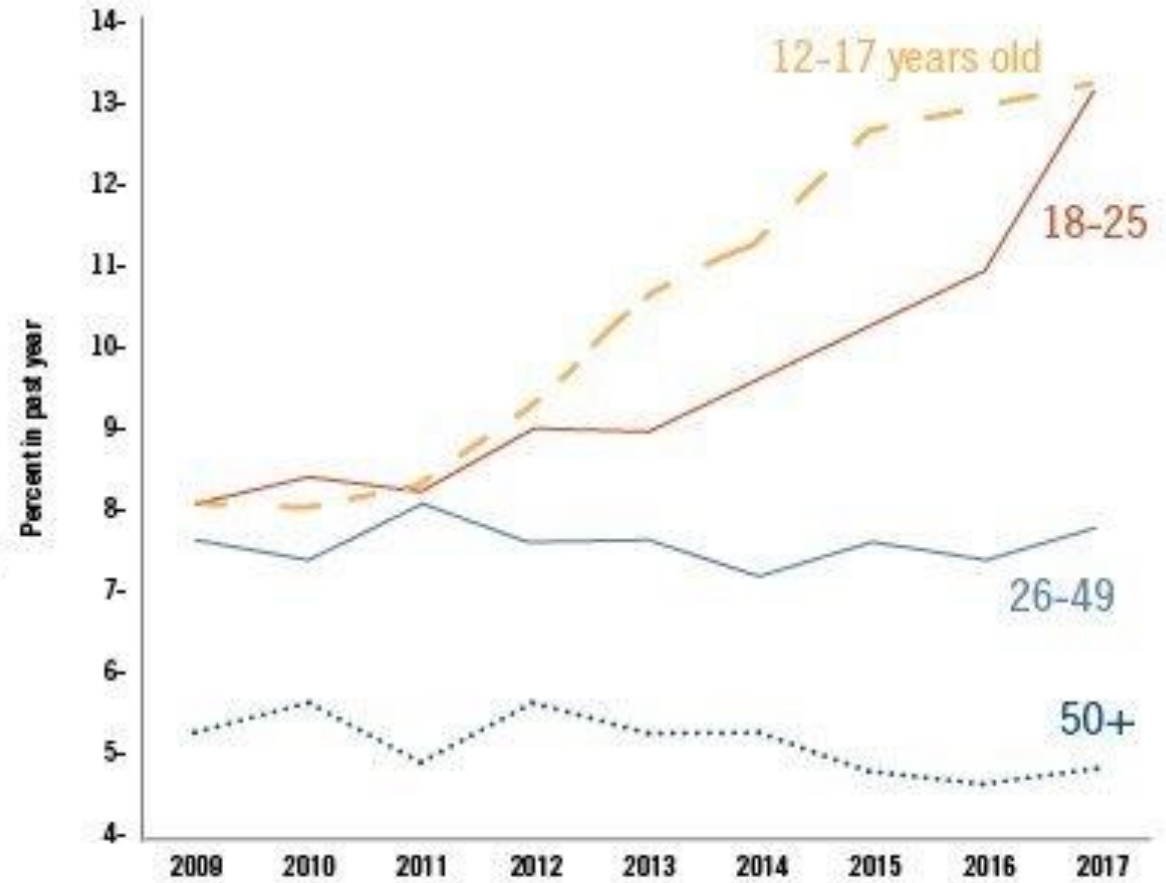
The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and substantial negative impact on student mental health.

Source: *Strength in our Voices, 2020*

# Even Before the Pandemic.....

## STUDENT DEPRESSION ON THE RISE

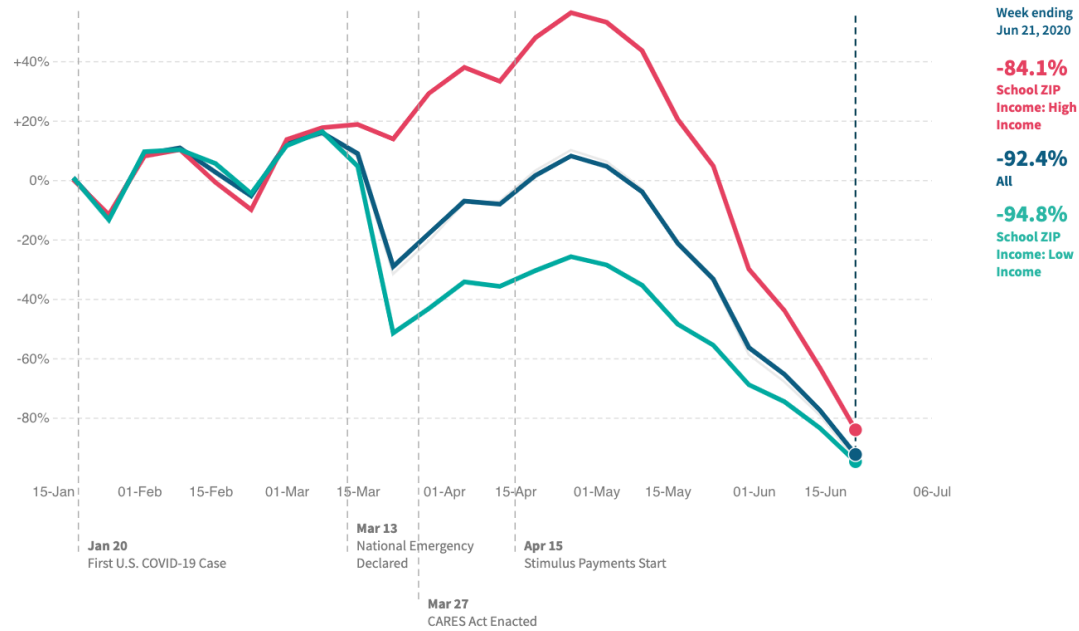
An analysis of a federal survey shows increasing rates of teen and young adult respondents reporting a major depressive episode in the last 12 months. Rates have stayed more consistent among older adults.



SOURCE: Journal of Abnormal Psychology

### Percent Change in Student Math Progress\*

In the United States, as of June 21, 2020, total student progress in online math coursework decreased by **92.4%** compared to January 2020.



\*Change in student progress through online math curriculum, indexed to Jan 6-Feb 2 2020. This series is based on data from Zearn using online usage data from Zearn Math, a math program normally used in classrooms that combines hands-on instruction with digital lessons. Data is limited to existing school users.

last updated: June 22, 2020 next update expected: July 06, 2020

visit [tracktherecovery.org](http://tracktherecovery.org) to explore

# Similar Story for Academics

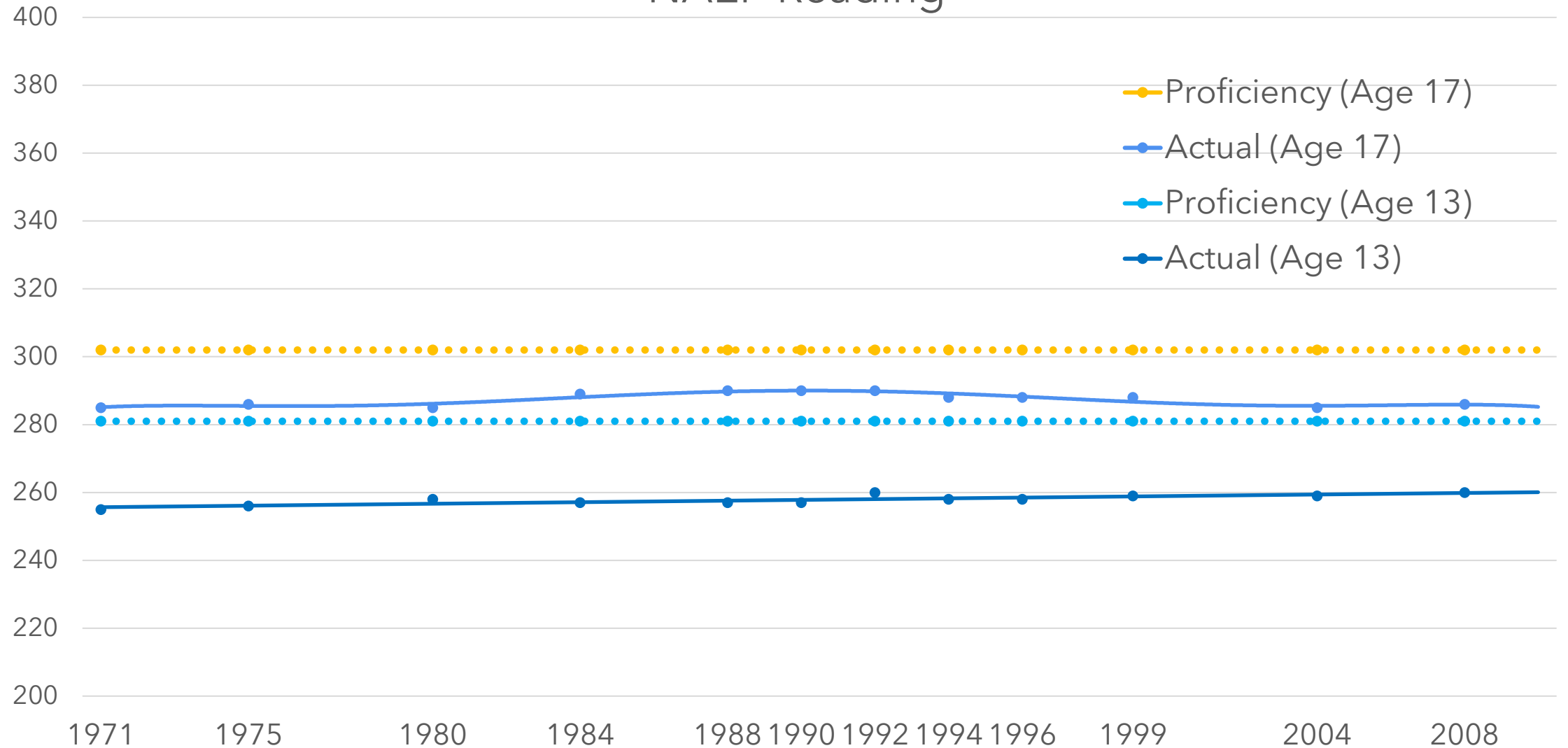
Students lose up to a year's worth of learning

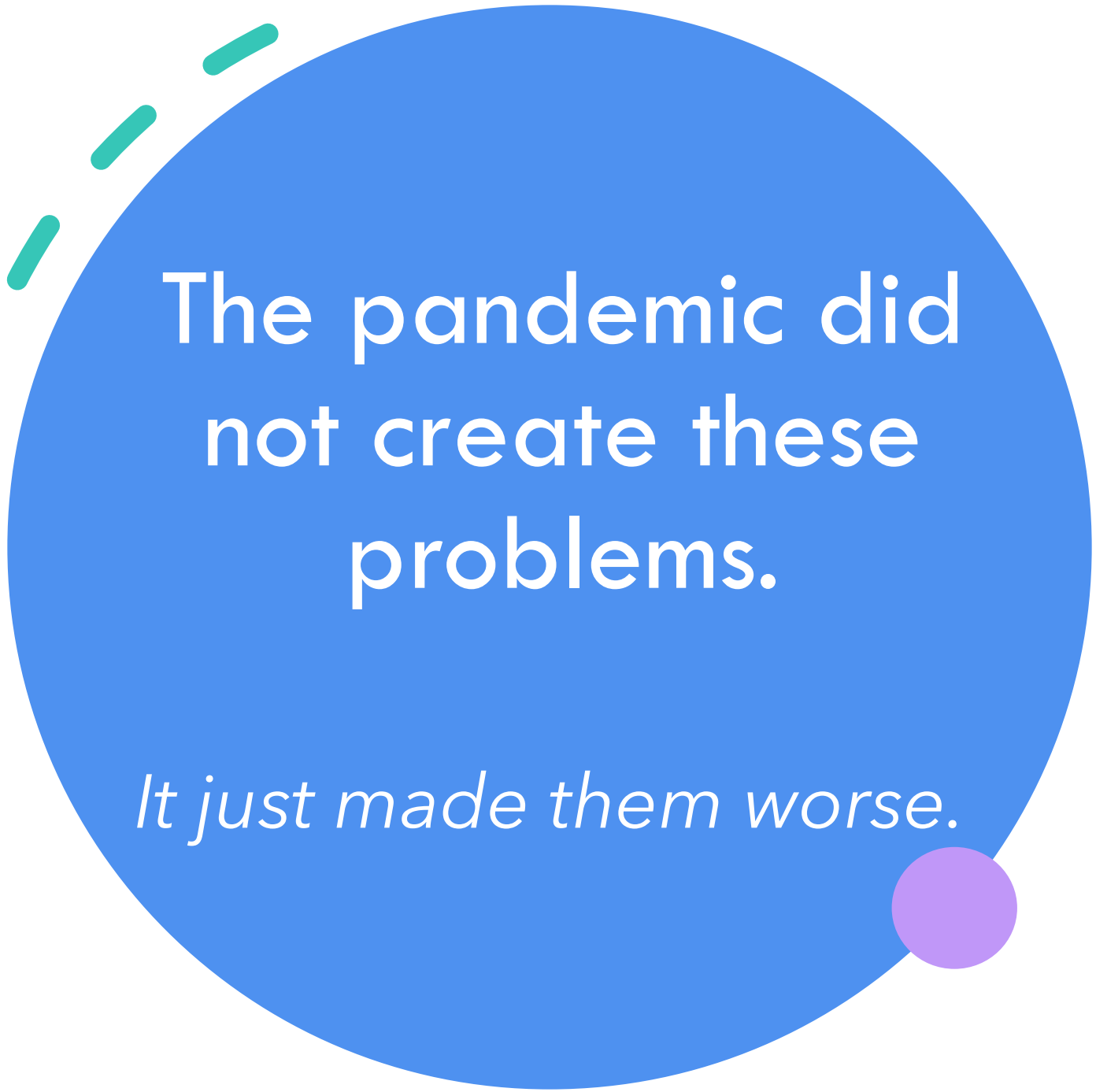
- Only 63-68% of the gains in reading and 37-50% of the gains in mathematics compared to a typical school year
- Nearly 7 million students could drop out

➤ Low-income and/or underrepresented families are particularly vulnerable

# Even Before the Pandemic.....

## NAEP Reading





The pandemic did  
not create these  
problems.

*It just made them worse.*



# LEARNING IS PROFOUNDLY SOCIAL

A positive environment that supports a sense of belonging is key to student success

Hire teachers and administrators who reflect the diversity of your students<sup>7</sup>

Adopt strong anti-bullying policies to promote inclusivity and improve school safety for marginalized students<sup>5</sup>

Encourage teachers to engage in perspective-taking to better understand students' experiences and the negative feelings that may lead to misbehavior<sup>8</sup>

Provide educators with training on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and resilience to stress and trauma<sup>6</sup>

## CHANGE THE QUESTION

Why do these students have poor social and emotional capacities?



How can we ensure our school climate leads to the healthy development of each student?

## SCHOOLWIDE ACTIONS

Take a schoolwide approach to SEL that includes policies and practices that foster positive climate, such as replacing punitive or exclusionary discipline with restorative justice<sup>9</sup> or positive behavioral interventions and supports<sup>10</sup>

# BELONGING

Strive to find common ground and similarities with all your students<sup>13</sup>

Use mindfulness practices to reduce your exhaustion and stress<sup>14</sup>

Use culturally responsive practices to promote a sense of belonging in students from traditionally underserved groups<sup>16</sup>

Encourage students to focus on mastery rather than performance goals. Cultivate a classroom in which mistakes are understood to be part of learning, effort is valued, and students learn to appreciate challenges<sup>17</sup>

➤ **Are social issues at the root of the problem?**

## CLASSROOM-LEVEL ACTIONS

Noticing students who don't seem to feel comfortable in the school?

Structure dynamic group work

Have, communicate, and support high expectations for all your students<sup>12</sup>



# Learning is Profoundly Social

## Negative peer interactions create risk

- Are highly stressful
- Interfere with learning
- Create mental health problems

## Positive peer interactions are protective

- Reduce stress
- Enhance engagement and achievement
- Reduce mental health problems





# School Closings Revealed Limitations



Students with social capital were better able to cope

- Existing friendship networks
- More able to access social connection and support
- Avoid or attenuate school engagement and mental health problems



Students with less social capital were less able to cope

- Few friends
- Less able to access social connection and support
- More severe school engagement and mental health problems

# How can we generate peer connection and social capital for students that need it most?

Put students in small learning groups under specific conditions (cooperative or peer learning)

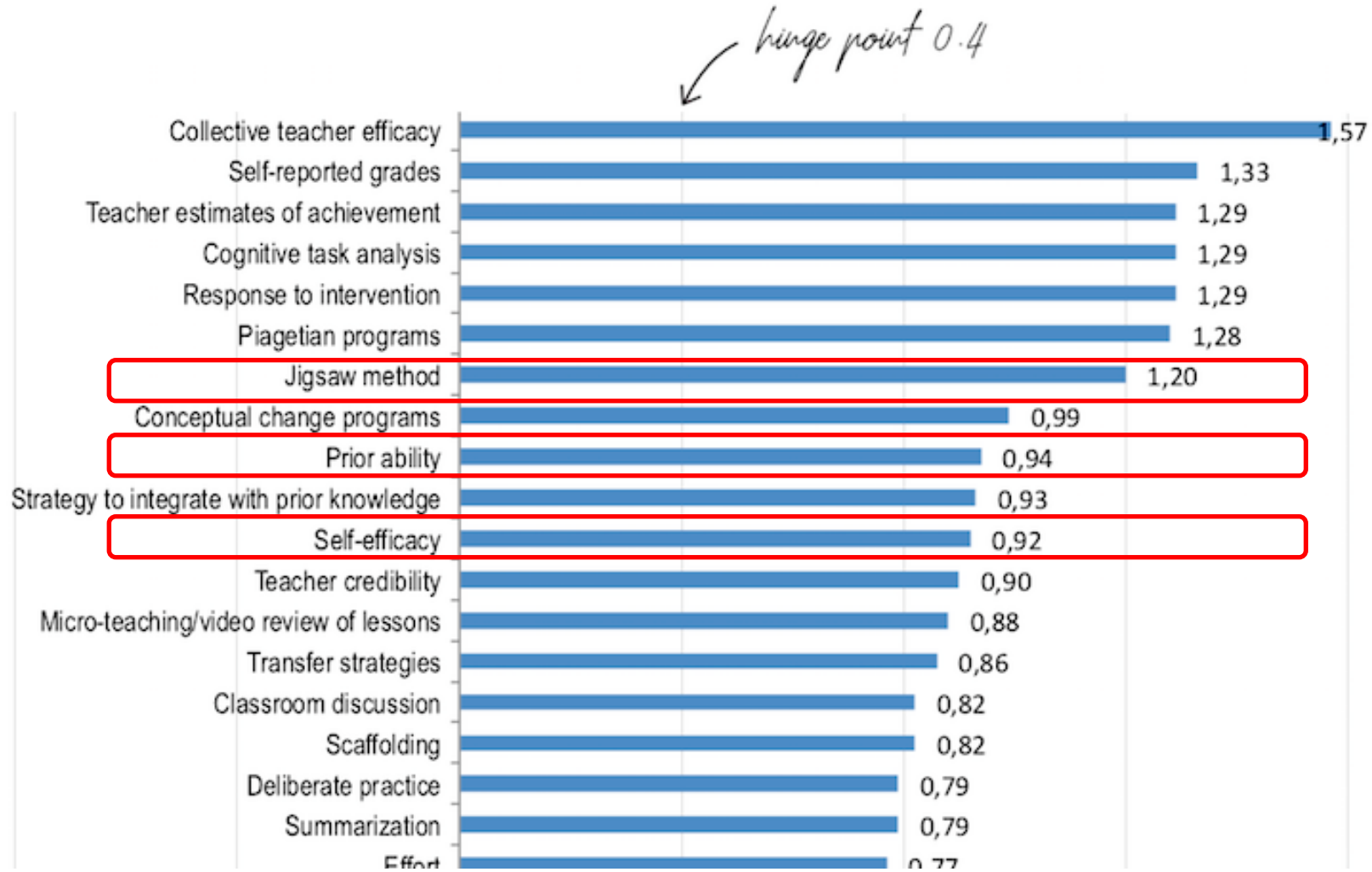
1. Create the incentive to collaborate
2. Ensure individual accountability
3. Explicitly develop group social skills
4. Guide group processing and reflection

Without this structure, we run the risk of generating negative outcomes

- Conflict over approach/tasks
- Loafing/free-riding
- Negative social *and* academic outcomes

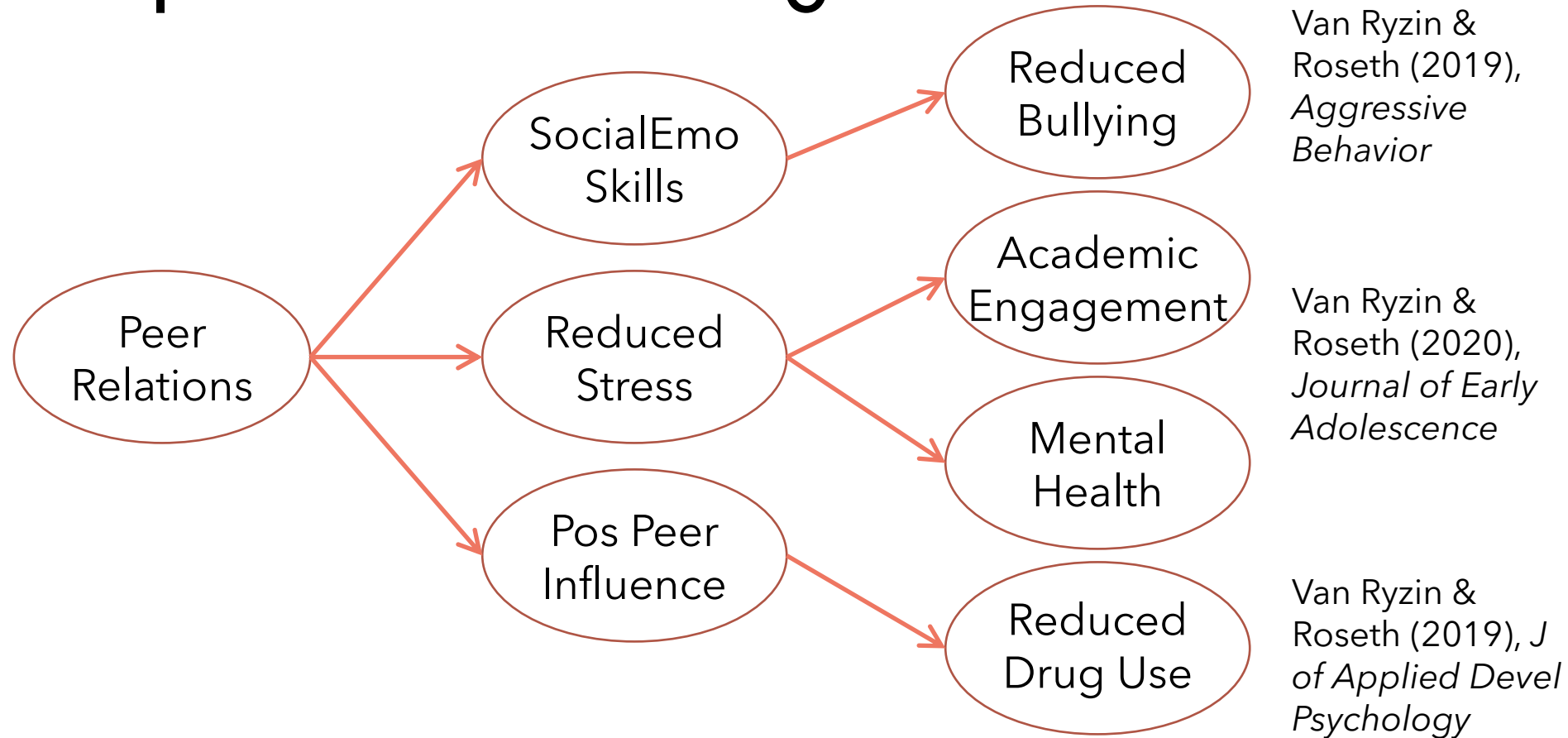
# Hattie's 2018 updated list of factors related to student achievement: 252 influences and effect sizes (Cohen's d)

Source: J. Hattie (December 2017) [visiblelearningplus.com](http://visiblelearningplus.com)  
Diagram: S. Waack (2018) [visible-learning.org](http://visible-learning.org)



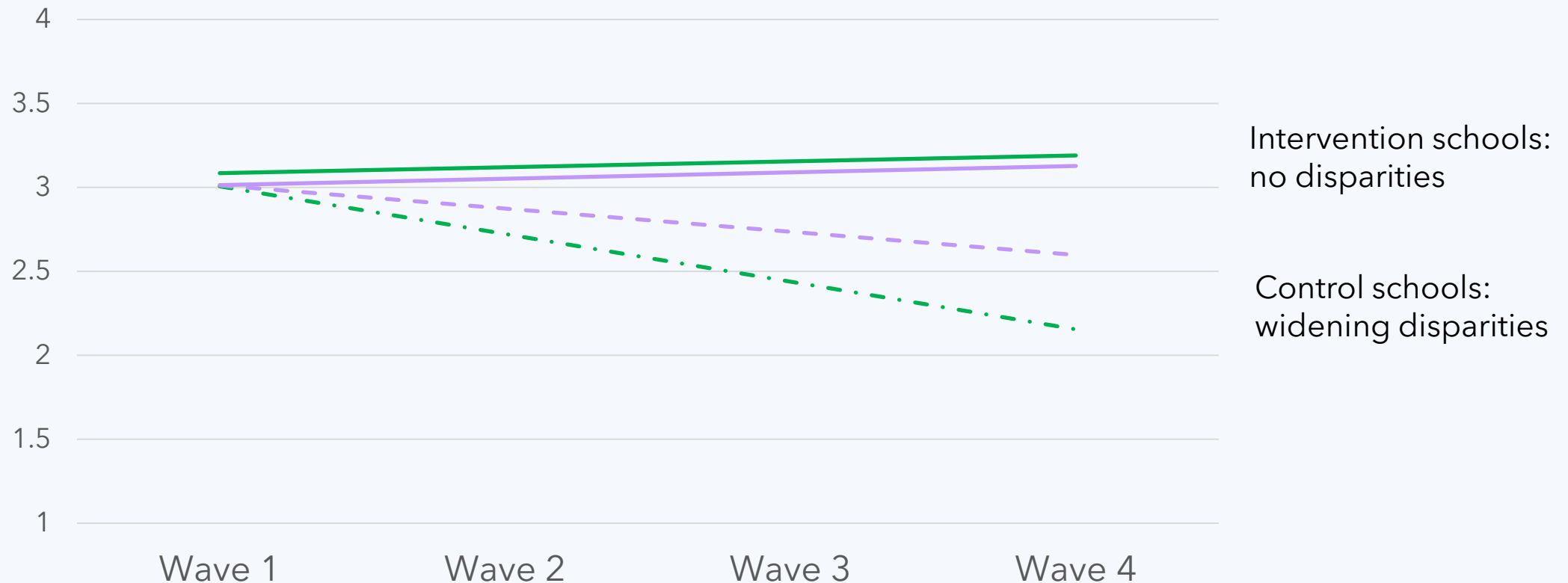
➤ **Small-group learning can overcome student limitations**

# Social, Behavioral, Mental Health Benefits of Cooperative Learning



➤ **The pedagogy is just as important as the curriculum**

# Reduced Disparities for Students of Color, Students with Disabilities



Source: Van Ryzin et al. 2020, 2023



## Cooperative Learning

**WHAT IS IT?** Cooperative learning is a successful teaching a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for

**WHY USE IT?** Documented results include improved academic Cooperative learning is also relatively easy to implement and

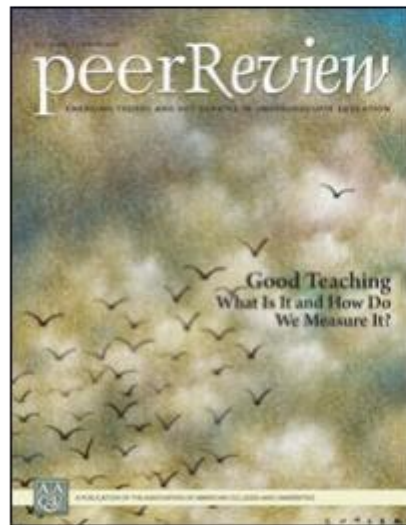
**HOW DOES IT WORK?** Here are some typical strategies that

- **Group Investigations** are structured to emphasize high
- **STAD (Student Teams-Achievement Divisions)** is used by the teacher and to help each reach his or her highest



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ISSUES AND ACTION

TOOLS AND IDEAS

GRANTS

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## Research Spotlight on Cooperative Learning

*NEA Reviews of the Research on Best Practices in Education*

by NEA staff researchers

Found In: [teaching strategies](#)

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Peer Instruction

Manage Student View

Help your class as they work in Peer Instruction. Don't forget to add social points!

Filter By Needs Help (1) Done (6) Edit

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
1 Points	0 Points	0 Points	1 Points	0 Points
Peter Parker Parts of Plants	Daniel Wilson Parts of Plants	Ezekiel Howell Parts of Plants	Laurel Benson Parts of Plants	Trevor Dilley Parts of Plants
Fox Kazi Types of Plants	Mike Biglan Types of Plants	Greyson Yant Types of Plants	Keith Hamm Types of Plants	Greg Mckelvey Types of Plants
Mary Jane What Plants Need	Charles Xavier What Plants Need	Will Black What Plants Need	Brooke Zunka What Plants Need	Tiffany Kesler What Plants Need
Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9	Group 10
0 Points	0 Points	2 Points	0 Points	0 Points
Peecho Kazi Parts of Plants	Woot Beaker Parts of Plants	Bruce Wayne Parts of Plants	Jean Grey Parts of Plants	Andrew Koch Parts of Plants
Brett Ansite Types of Plants	Stephen Strange Types of Plants	Shahan Kazi Types of Plants	Clark Kent Types of Plants	Nathan Westlake Types of Plants
Alexander Wood What Plants Need	Ali Atanasov What Plants Need	Carissa Bunnell What Plants Need	Barry Allen What Plants Need	James Bond What Plants Need

Today's Lesson: The Study of Plants | Your Subtopic: Types of Plants | Social Goal: 4 / 1

# Why isn't it more prevalent?

1. Core principles not widely understood
2. Can be complex to design and deliver
3. Educators lack sufficient training and support

PEER INSTRUCTION

Listen to your peer instructor and take notes.

**Your Tasks:**  
subtext-check-done

- Listen to your peer instructor
- Ask questions
- Take notes

Done?

INSTRUCTOR ORDER

1. Peecho Kazi  
Parts of Plants
2. Brett Ansite  
Types of Plants

>> Content Notes

### Types of Plants

Most plants you are familiar with grow from a seed. However, there are also plants that grow from a tiny, microscopic cell called a spore. Plants that make seeds or spores can be broken down into even smaller categories.

```

graph TD
    A[Types of Plants] --> B[Makes Seeds]
    A --> C[Makes Spores]
    B --> B1[Flowering]
    B --> B2[Nonflowering]
    C --> C1[No roots, stem, or leaves]
    C --> C2[Few roots, stem & leaves]
    C --> C3[Has roots, stem & leaves]
    B1 --> B1a[Tulip]
    B2 --> B2a[Conifer]
    C1 --> C1a[Algae]
    C2 --> C2a[Moss]
    C3 --> C3a[Fern]
    
```

**Plants That Make Seeds**

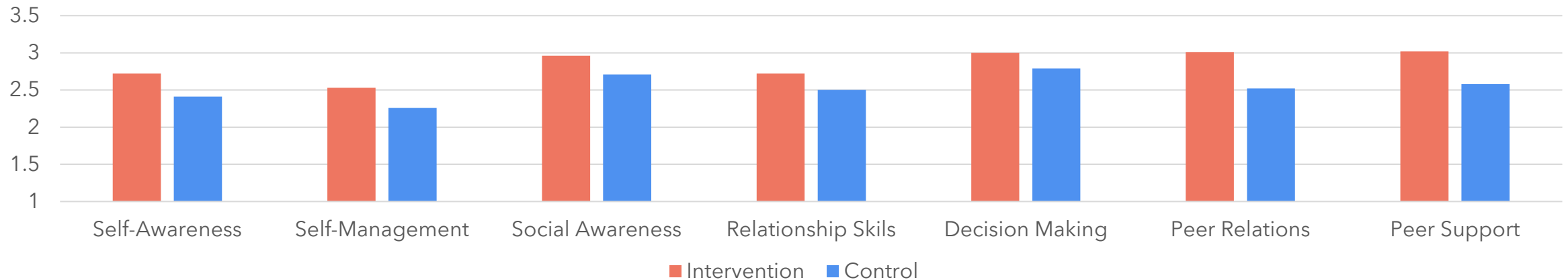
Plants that make seeds are separated into two types called flowering and nonflowering plants. Flowering plants use flowers to reproduce, or make new seeds. This happens as a result of the process of pollination. In flowering plants, pollinators, such as bees, transfer pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part of another flower so new seeds can be made. Nonflowering plants

**PeerLearning.net:** a software platform for implementing small-group learning

- Fidelity to design principles
- Accepts existing curricula and learning materials in any subject
- Scalable, accessible, sustainable

# Initial Results from a Randomized Trial

PeerLearning.net vs. Business as Usual



- Significant growth in all five CASEL SEL competencies and peer relations/support
- Significant reductions in drug use, stress, mental health problems
- Significant improvements in sleep quality
- Significant improvements in teacher efficacy and reductions in stress/burnout
- Dosage effects



## Take-Aways

School does not give sufficient attention to social aspects of learning and mental health.

SEL doesn't always imply a program or a curriculum; this structured small-group pedagogy can work just as well, or better.

The barriers to implementing this small-group pedagogy can be addressed with technology.

The effects are likely to be strongest for those students that need it the most.

# Resources

- <https://www.peerlearning.net/>
  - Web site with information, videos, and resources related to PeerLearning.net
- <https://www.theconversation.com/small-group-learning-can-mitigate-the-effects-of-school-closures-but-only-if-teachers-use-it-well-170701>
  - Summary of findings on cooperative learning written for practitioners
- [https://medium.com/@markv\\_13139/addressing-prejudice-and-building-racial-equity-in-schools-31ad34eee683](https://medium.com/@markv_13139/addressing-prejudice-and-building-racial-equity-in-schools-31ad34eee683)
  - How cooperative learning can contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Please contact me if you would like professional development resources for cooperative learning





Thank  
you

Mark J. Van Ryzin  
University of Oregon

MarkV@UOregon.edu