



Stride, Inc. Bucks National Trend and Provides Improved Student Outcomes During COVID–19: New Study Refutes Claims of Learning Loss in Online Programs

The "COVID–Slide" Doesn't Apply to Every Student

Educators, administrators, and parents across the country are committed to closing the learning loss gap—an unfortunate trend that's been exasperated by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Now referred to as the "COVID slide," both private and public institutions are diligently focused on creating high-quality education solutions that help students catch up and stay engaged.



However, it's important to note that some schools—in particular, online schools powered by Stride K12—reported lower learning loss rates than those reported in national studies. In fact, in some cases, students enrolled in Stride K12-powered schools actually experienced learning gains.

In one such study, researchers at the Northwest Evaluation Association* (NWEA), show consistent levels of assessment performance in reading for all grades tested. However, student performance in mathematics dropped considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students enrolled at Stride K12-powered schools, and who participate in one of NWEA's growth assessments, did not experience the same level of learning loss as their peers. In fact, they were more likely to maintain or grow academically than to slide.

NWEA MAP Growth assessment

student assessment
performance differences
before and during pandemic

4.5 million U.S. students
in grades 3–7



Study and Assessment Methods

NWEA’s MAP Growth is an innovative assessment used to measure achievement and growth in K–12 math, reading, language usage, and science. NWEA researchers used MAP Growth assessment results of nearly 4.5 million U.S. students in grades 3-7 when the pandemic began (and are now in grades 4-8) to observe the performance differences between Winter 2019 to Fall 2019 (subsequently referred to as “before the COVID-19 pandemic”) and Winter 2020 to Fall 2020 (subsequently referred to as “during the COVID-19 pandemic”) to understand the impact of the pandemic on learning progress.

As part of the study, NWEA researchers used multiple methods to assess learning loss. For example, in one analysis, NWEA researchers divided student performance into achievement quintiles or levels and tracked student performance between the categories of “before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.” The results helped determine the impact of COVID-19 on student assessment performance. In tracking these shifts in performance, NWEA placed students into three distinct categories:

1	Gainers	Students who moved up one or more achievement levels between testing periods.
2	Maintainers	Students who maintained the achievement level they were in between periods.
3	Sliders	Students who moved down one or more achievement levels.

Students at Stride K12–powered Schools Outperform National Trends

Internal researchers at Stride used the methodology identified in NWEA’s study to analyze data related to the pandemic’s impact on student performance in Stride K12-powered schools, compared to results identified in the NWEA study.

The study concluded that most students in Stride K12-powered schools identified as “Maintainers,” which means they did not experience significant learning loss or experience better than anticipated gains in learning. Learning progressed as normal for these students.

However, per the below chart, students enrolled in schools powered by Stride’s K12 programs significantly outperformed the national sample in the NWEA study. The percentage of students classified as “Sliders” decreased year-over-year during the pandemic in schools powered by Stride K12. Conversely, students classified as “Sliders” in the NWEA study increased year-over-year, particularly in mathematics.

The percentage point difference between the national sample and Stride is particularly jarring with differences between the two groups ranging from 7.8 to 27.7 percentage points in mathematics and 1.7 to 12.7 percentage points in reading. This means that schools powered by Stride K12 have not only been successful in reducing learning loss during the pandemic, but they are also more successful in helping students maintain and even make learning gains.

It’s important to note that Stride K12-powered students were not completely sheltered from the impact of the pandemic. Like most students across the country, they wrestled with fears of contracting the virus and the additional stressors of sick or out-of-work loved ones.

Percentage Point Difference Before and During COVID–19 Pandemic						
Grade Level in Fall 2020	Students Classified as “Sliders” in Reading			Students Classified as “Sliders” in Math		
	National	Stride	Stride Outperforms National Group	National	Stride	Stride Outperforms National Group
4th	4.8	-6.4	✓	21.1	-6.6	✓
5th	5.0	-7.7	✓	18.5	-7.8	✓
6th	3.9	-4.7	✓	15.1	-10.8	✓
7th	2.6	-0.9	✓	10.6	-3.2	✓
8th	1.8	0.1	✓	8.5	0.7	✓

*Positive numbers indicate an increase in the percentage of students classified as Sliders. Negative numbers indicate a decrease in the percentage of students classified as Sliders.

Key Takeaways

- Amid this unprecedented time, students at schools powered by Stride K12 were more likely to maintain their achievement level in both reading and mathematics than they were to slide backward.
 - Researchers concluded that the decreases in the “Sliders” category in both reading and mathematics during the pandemic is likely due to Stride’s experience and expertise in online learning and the company’s capacity to provide stable, continuous instruction throughout the pandemic.
 - Driven by the dedicated wraparound support services available to all students enrolled at Stride K12-powered schools, student engagement remains strong during the COVID-19 pandemic.
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The results of this research highlight how the “COVID-slide”—feared by many school administrators and policymakers—has not been as significant among online students as first theorized.

What’s more, research on student NWEA performance, before and during the pandemic, has shown that students at schools powered by Stride K12 have increased their achievement levels.

These findings illustrate the reputability and capability of leading online schools to provide high-quality instruction to students of varying backgrounds amid the pandemic.



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***NWEA’s MAP Growth is the most trusted and innovative assessment for measuring achievement and growth in K–12 math, reading, language usage, and science. It provides teachers with accurate, and actionable evidence to help target instruction for each student or groups of students regardless of how far above or below they are from their grade level. It also connects to the largest set of instructional content providers, giving educators flexibility in curriculum choices. Source: NWEA.org*