

Strategies for supporting learners after school closures

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Extending the school day for extra teaching and tutoring has been suggested as a strategy to mitigate the negative effect of partial school closures on academic attainment. However, evidence on the effectiveness of such a strategy is mixed. Some research suggests that pupils can make an additional two months' progress per year from extended school time (EEF, 2019) whilst most recent OECD PISA data shows that on average, remedial or 'after school' lessons did not have an impact on student reading performance (OECD, 2020).

In contrast, a quiet room for homework, peer-to-peer tutoring and creative extracurricular activities were all associated with higher student performance on PISA 2018 (OECD, 2020) and will be discussed here to support teachers and school leaders looking to implement recovery strategies for their students with the caveat that this data was not collected during the pandemic.

A quiet room for homework and study after school hours

A quiet room where students can do their homework and study after school was the most frequently observed

strategy for after-school support in the PISA 2018 dataset with advantaged schools providing this support more frequently than disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2020). Even after accounting for per capita GDP, students with access to quiet study space performed better on average in reading, maths and science across countries (OECD, 2020). Access to a quiet study space in school may be of particular importance to those students who cannot access such a space at home.

Peer tutoring

Peer-to-peer tutoring was also associated with higher student performance in the latest PISA data although to a smaller extent (OECD, 2020). There is extensive research on peer tutoring and overall, it has been found to have a positive effect on attainment equivalent to five months' additional progress, with benefits identified for both tutors and tutees (EEF, 2018; Thurston et al, 2021). Some evidence suggests that gains are greatest for children with SEND and those who are low attaining (EEF, 2018) and that peer tutoring programmes are most effective when they take place during school hours (Alegre-Ansuategui et al., 2018). However, some more recent RCTs and meta-analyses suggest that it does not always lead to

an increase in attainment (EEF, 2018; Alegre et al, 2019) and that effects may be heterogenous. Ensuring that tutoring supplements rather than replaces regular teaching, providing tutors with supporting materials such as question frames or monitoring the implementation of peer tutoring are some strategies that can make peer tutoring more effective (EEF, 2018).

Extracurricular activities

Countries whose schools offer a larger amount of creative extra curricular activities showed greater equity in student performance and students enrolled at schools providing such activities perform better in reading on average (OECD, 2020). Some research also suggests that extracurricular activities can have a positive impact on academic achievement and literacy development (Carbonaro and Maloney, 2019; Gordon et al., 2015). Providing students with access to creative extracurricular activities may hence not only broaden their curricular experiences and develop their expertise in these subjects but may even have a positive impact on their academic achievement and should be considered by schools and policymakers as part of recovery strategies.

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