

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS TEST SCORES

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The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged onward over the last year and has greatly impacted student learning. An average student is predicted to fall behind approximately seven months academically; however, this learning gap predicts Latinx and Black students will fall behind by 9 and 10 months, respectively (Seiden, 2020). Moreover, the shift to online instruction impacted students' ability to learn as they encountered new stressors, anxiety, illness, and the pandemic's psychological effects (Middleton, 2020). Despite the unprecedented circumstances that students were precipitously thrust into, state testing and assessments continue. Assessments during the pandemic are likely to produce invalid results due to "test pollution," which refers to the systemic "increase or decrease in test scores unrelated to the content domain" (Middleton, 2020, p. 2). Considering the global pandemic, test pollution is prominent and worth exploring as it is uncertain whether state testing can identify the impact COVID is having on student learning.

NWEA produces the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment test. NWEA argues that MAP testing can also provide school districts with the ability to "identify trends for students, create flexible learning groups, and target professional development for teachers" (Belgard, 2017, p.1). This case study research aims to identify if current learning conditions have impacted MAP scores in a rural school setting due to the pandemic. The three research questions are: (a) Is there a statistically significant difference in 4th grade MAP math scores between students in the September 2019 cohort and September 2020 cohort? (b) Is there a statistically significant difference between 4th-grade math MAP scores based on gender within this rural school district between September 2019-September 2020? (c) Is there a statistically significant difference between this school districts' 4th grade math scores and national 4th grade math MAP scores for September 2019 -September 2020?

Data analyses suggest no statistically significant difference between the two cohorts, nor is there a statistically significant difference in 4th grade MAP math scores between male and female students. Data findings suggest no statistical significance between our case study cohorts' mean math scores and the comparison groups: the case study district, and the national norm data. While COVID has a wide-reaching impact on school activities, our findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic may not necessarily affect student learning outcomes as measured using MAP scores. Future studies that utilize qualitative methods, such as teacher and student interviews, should be conducted to problematize these findings.

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