

# The effects of remediation programs during the COVID-19 pandemic on achievements of vulnerable students

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In March 2020, suddenly, the world was forced to cope with the COVID-19 outbreak, and as a result, all schools closed in many countries, including the Netherlands. Students were forced to resume education in an online setting from home. Not long after that, research showed that students in the first half-year of the COVID-19 pandemic experienced large learning delays compared to peers from previous cohorts. To minimize the detrimental effects of these school closures, schools could apply for funds initiated by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture to set up various remediation programs in 2020/2021. Unique standardized test score data from Dutch primary school students were combined with information about remediation programs. Applying a difference-in-difference design, we found an overall significant but modest positive effect of participation in remediation programs on students' achievement (+0.05 SD). Participants of remediation programs had higher scores on standardized tests afterward. Although vulnerable students still lack behind compared to non-participants, around 11% of inequality is reduced. When analyzing the interventions of various remediation programs, we found that small-scale programs and remedial teaching programs were most effective for increasing students' achievements (+ 0.16 SD and + 0.26 SD).