

## **Student wellbeing and academic performance linked to positive student-teacher relationship**



*Teaching is the single-most influential factor within the schooling system for student academic growth. What then, are the facets that lead to effective, influential and impactful teachers?*

Teachers have influence well beyond their students; they play a vital part in the school culture as whole as well as the education system. Understanding what makes an effective teacher, therefore is essential for flourishing schools, the education system and the community as a whole.

## **The quality of teachers is the most influential factor we have control over, in relation to impact on students**

But what is meant by 'impact' and how can it be measured? Is it higher test scores, a love for learning, increased engagement with others or a combination of outcomes?

Student test scores, for example are not always a reliable indicator of assessing teaching performance as there are various other contributing factors such as home life, peer groups and school attendance. Using test results to evaluate teachers can also lead to undesirable consequences. These might include a narrowing of the curriculum to focus on what is related to tests, a disincentive to teach high-needs students or even unwittingly encourage dishonest teaching practices.

Valuing student outcomes outside of academic achievement, in fact, is becoming more important in measuring teacher effectiveness.

[Research by the OECD](#) shows that across countries, students that report having a positive relationship with their teacher are more likely to say they are:

- happy at school
- make friends easily
- feel a sense of belonging
- more satisfied with their school.

In addition, there is a strong correlation between teacher-student relationship and academic achievement. Teachers that demonstrate qualities such as empathy, warmth and encouragement are linked to improved student achievement as well as attitudes.

Students are also less likely to exhibit resistant behaviours when taught by person-centred teachers with high levels of non-directivity, empathy and authenticity.

Other factors that positively correlate with academic achievement include students' belief in their own abilities (self-efficacy), subjective wellbeing and self-motivation.

## **Teachers as leaders for effectiveness**

Teachers as leaders are beneficial to schools and teacher effectiveness, motivation and retention. Administrative staff play an essential role in determining the success of a school. In the most successful schools, administrators support teachers in taking initiative to

improve school policies, programs, teaching and communication.

The three main areas where teachers as leaders have the greatest impact is:

1. within their own departments or teams
2. across the school
3. beyond the school – into the community and the profession.

Here teachers have the opportunity to enhance the professional development of peers, influence the decision-making process and target student learning.

Schools can improve in this area by developing the conditions for teachers to flourish as leaders. Gone are the days principals shouldered all the burden. The whole faculty's inclusion in the school's vision through the distribution of leadership is critical to its success and growth.

## **For more information**

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