Teacher expectations are ideas teachers hold about the potential achievement of students. They are important because:

- they determine the level and types of instruction teachers plan for students and can have a substantial impact on student outcomes;
- teachers behave differently towards students for whom they hold high expectations, compared to students for whom they hold low expectations, and
- these behaviours signal clearly to students what sort of expectations their teacher holds for them and can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy effect
- teachers are more likely to have high or low expectations for all their students.

The project was designed to test whether teacher expectations for all students could be raised and sustained.

Teachers were randomly assigned to control and intervention groups and tracked for three years. The intervention group were introduced to and taught the specific teaching practices of high expectation teachers. These related to:

- using flexible grouping (rather than ability grouping);
- creating a warm, positive class climate; and
- using goal-setting to increase student motivation, engagement and autonomy, and improve teacher evaluation and feedback.

During the second and third years, the research tracked whether teachers’ altered expectations were sustained and whether they maintained the innovative practices.

The analysis showed that

- students in the intervention group gained 28% additional learning in mathematics in one year compared with the control group;
- the program was more effective in enhancing the achievement of students in the intervention group when compared with those in the control group – no matter what the socioeconomic level of the school, the year level of the students, student ethnic group, and gender.

This study suggests that when taught the practices of high expectation teachers, all teachers are able to raise student achievement.

References


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