 Teachers’ effectiveness is often measured by their ability to improve student standardized achievement test scores in core academic subjects, such as math and reading. However, research points to the importance of social and emotional skills, such as collaboration and self-regulation, in student well-being and success both in and outside of the classroom. This research, along with an interest in understanding how teachers affect student behaviors and attainment, has encouraged researchers to investigate how teachers and teaching affect outcomes beyond achievement test scores.

Teachers matter for both test and nontest score outcomes. Teacher effects are typically estimated using such techniques as value-added modeling or student growth percentiles, which rely on standardized achievement test scores. Recently, researchers have used similar methods to investigate the extent to which teachers influence a wider range of student outcomes. These studies find that being assigned to a more or less effective teacher is just as meaningful for students’ attendance, suspensions, on-track grade progression, and selected student social and emotional skills measured by student and teacher surveys, among other outcomes, as it is for their test scores.

Teachers who excel at raising test scores do not necessarily excel at improving other outcomes. Studies find that teachers’ test score effects are often only weakly related to their effects on other outcomes. One study even found that teachers’ ability to decrease absences and suspensions was negatively related to their ability to increase test scores. These findings support the common-sense notion that teacher effectiveness is not fully captured by focusing on a single outcome.

This research highlights the value of examining teacher effectiveness using multiple outcome measures. Students’ exposure to effective teachers, as measured by effects on test scores, is predictive of longer-run outcomes, such as postsecondary attendance. At the same time, research indicates that other student behaviors and outcomes, such as attendance and social and emotional skills, also predict student performance in school and later in life. While additional research is needed to further validate specific measures of teachers’ contributions to nontest outcomes, personnel policy that aims to develop teacher ability at promoting a range of outcomes can help ensure that teachers are equipped to help students develop the skills needed for future success.
Related Readings

About This Research
Research shows that teachers matter for both test and non-test score outcomes. Teachers who excel at raising test scores do not necessarily excel at improving other outcomes. This research in the public interest was supported by RAND, using discretionary funds made possible by the generosity of RAND’s donors and the fees earned on client-funded research.

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