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## Should Student Behavior Be Part of Teacher Evaluations?

From:  
[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/10/teachers\\_improve\\_student\\_behavior\\_test\\_scores.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2018/10/teachers_improve_student_behavior_test_scores.html)

By Madeline Will on October 23, 2018 12:02 AM

Determining teachers' impact on test scores isn't enough to measure effectiveness—policymakers must also look at how teachers affect their students' behavior, [a new study suggests](#).

In fact, teachers' impact on non-cognitive skills, like adaptability, motivation, and self-restraint, is 10 times more predictive of students' long-term success than teachers' impact on student test scores, according to the study, which was published in the journal Education Next.

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*[Researcher] Jackson found that a student's behavior index is a much stronger predictor of future success than his or her test scores.*

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"Test scores are certainly a measure of a set of skills students need to be successful in school and perhaps later in life," said C. Kirabo Jackson, a professor of human development and social policy at Northwestern University and the author of the study. But test scores don't measure social-emotional and non-cognitive skills, he said. And the way that policymakers measure teacher quality is rooted in how their students perform on standardized tests. (Many evaluation systems use value-added measures, which attempt to quantify a teacher's impact on student learning by charting student progress against what they would ordinarily be expected to achieve.)

"The question is, is that a good measure of teachers?" Jackson said. "The finding is not that teachers who raise test scores are doing poorly in terms of raising softer skills, [but] if you can identify teachers who raise both sets of skills, you'll do a better job of identifying" the best teachers.

Jackson studied seven years of data from North Carolina public school 9th graders who took classes in which their teachers receive traditional value-added ratings: English I and one of three math classes.

He created a behavior index that measures students' non-cognitive skills—the index included data like absences, suspensions, grade point averages, and on-time progression to 10th grade. He also created a test-score index that is the average of students' 9th grade math and English scores.

Controlling for poverty and other demographic factors, Jackson found that a student's behavior index is a much stronger predictor of future success than his or her test scores. Future success includes graduating from high school on time, having a higher GPA at graduation, taking the SAT, and reporting intentions to enroll in a four-year college.

"If a kid is assigned to a teacher who raises test scores, they're slightly more likely to graduate high school, but if they're assigned to a teacher who raises softer skills, those kids are much more likely to graduate high school," Jackson said.

On average, a teacher's effectiveness at improving one set of skills is not necessarily an indicator of their ability to improve the other set, the study found. Teachers who are better at raising test scores do tend to be better at improving student behavior, but there's not a strong correlation.

For example, among the top third of teachers with the most impact on student behavior, only 58 percent of them are above average at improving test scores. And among the bottom third of teachers with the least impact on student behavior, nearly 40 percent of them significantly improved student test scores.

"There's a whole host of teachers we're misclassifying as being good or bad" based on their ability to raise test scores, Jackson said. But these teachers could be excellent at improving student behavior, which isn't measured in most evaluation systems.

Another recent study found that [elementary teachers who are good at raising test scores are worse at making students feel happy and engaged at school](#). That study, out of the University of Maryland, found that 4th and 5th grade teachers who are skilled at improving students' math achievement may do so in ways that make students less happy in class.

While Jackson stressed that some teachers are able to both raise test scores and improve student behavior, he said the findings hammer home the need for multiple measures in evaluation systems and targeted professional development.

"The study raises as many questions as it resolves," Jackson said. The next question is how evaluations "can identify teachers who are absolutely having meaningful and large impacts on students' long-run success that would not have been identified using test scores," he said.

Jackson's preliminary research has found that student surveys, which are sometimes included in evaluations, do not indicate a teacher's impact on soft skills. More research needs to be done to find how to measure impact on soft skills, he said.

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From a policy perspective, Jackson said, "it would be valuable for the research community to get a handle on those classroom practices that are strongly associated with improving these softer skills that are associated with success [and] attach stakes to those things."

For example, he said, observation rubrics could encourage school leaders to look for those classroom practices and therefore, encourage teachers to engage in those practices.