



FACT
SHEET

08

A POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1 CONTEXT

A positive relationship between a student and his/her teacher can contribute to academic success. A warm and communicative relationship, particularly in the first few years of elementary school, has been associated with a number of indicators of long-term success in the education system, not only academic, but also social and emotional.

SOURCE

This fact sheet is a brief summary of the results presented in the following fascicle: DESROSIERS, HÉLÈNE, CHRISTA JAPEL, POOJA R. P. SINGH and KARINE TÉTREAULT (2012). "Positive Teacher-Student Relationships: Associations with Child Characteristics and Academic Achievement in Elementary School," in *Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2010) – From Birth to 10 Years of Age*, Institut de la statistique du Québec, Vol. 6, Fascicule 2. http://www.jesuisjeserai.stat.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/publications/feuillelet/ELDEQ_fasc6no2_an.pdf

Note that the QLSCD has been following a cohort of children who were born in Québec in 1997-1998.

2 HIGHLIGHTS

Teachers' perceptions¹

Between 6 and 10 years of age, namely between kindergarten and Grade 4, the children progressively shared less information spontaneously with their teacher. The teacher also increasingly lacked the capacity to understand what the children were feeling during this period.

In general, teachers reported a less positive and warm relationships with the following:

- Boys
- Children from low-income households
- Children perceived as having more behavioural problems (hyperactivity, inattention, opposition, aggression, emotional difficulties, anxiety).

For example, proportionally fewer teachers reported that it was easy to understand how boys were feeling, and perceived themselves less confident and effective in their interactions with students who had behavioural problems.

Children's perceptions

The majority of children had a very favourable opinion of their relationship with their teacher, particularly at the ages of 7 and 8 years. However, their opinion was less positive at the age of 10 years when the majority of children were in Grade 4.

Whatever the child's age under study, boys and children with more behavioural problems such as hyperactivity, inattention, opposition or aggression were less likely to report that they liked their teacher. They also were less likely to report that they could talk to their teacher and that she would listen to them and respond to them in a pleasant manner.

From 18% to 25% of teachers of children 6, 7, 8 and 10 years of age reported they did not feel very confident and effective in their interactions with them.

1. Whatever the grade level under study, the vast majority of children had female teachers, so we have used the feminine gender to facilitate reading.



2 HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Associations with academic performance

In Grades 1, 2 and 4 of elementary school, teachers reported having more positive and warmer relationships with children who had better academic performance. In contrast, it was only at the age of 10 years that a positive association was observed between students' assessment of their relationship with their teacher and their academic performance.

Beyond differences observed by family income or children's behavioural problems, the teachers' feeling of confidence and effectiveness, and to a lesser degree, their capacity for clearly understanding what the children were feeling, contributed to predicting the academic performance of children 10 years of age.

3 OF NOTE

No data were available for Grade 3.

Assessing the teacher-student relationship was conducted with the teachers when the children were 6, 7, 8 and 10 years of age. However, it was only from the age of 7 years on that it was assessed with the students.

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INTERVENTION PATHS

In light of the results, it would be important to establish or continue to implement support measures or professional interventions so that the teacher-student relationship can develop in a warm and positive manner throughout the academic trajectory of the children. Early intervention programs that promote behavioural and emotional self-regulation as well as social and cognitive skills in the children could also foster the development of positive relationships with teachers.