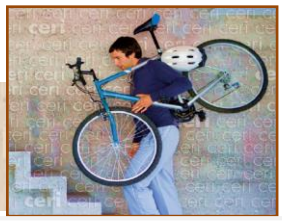


Trends Shaping Education Spotlight 19

Crime & punishment

Keeping a good disciplinary climate is a key to student learning and well-being. Disciplinary norms need to be clearly established and applied fairly and consistently. Yet, strictness alone cannot optimise student outcomes: students need support and understanding.

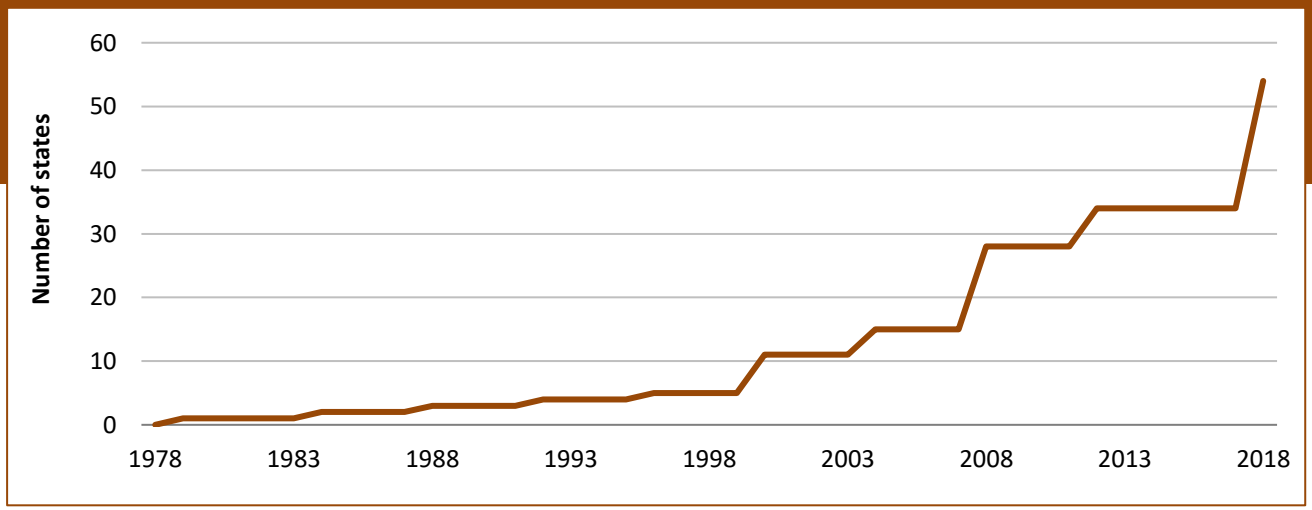
Wiping out corporal punishment

Corporal punishment entails the application of physical force or socially-degrading chastisement as a means of changing behavioural traits, most commonly in children (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019; Greydanus et al., 2003). In addition to violating children rights, its usage can lead to adverse health and learning outcomes (duRivage et al., 2015).

Historically, many societies considered corporal punishment to be beneficial; however, this attitude has been changing. In 1979, Sweden became the first country in the world to make it illegal to spank children in all settings, including both the home and schools. As shown in Figure 1, legal prohibition on the use of corporal punishment against children increased globally over the last two decades, from 11 states in 2000 to 54 in 2018.

Figure 1. Spare the child

Cumulative number of states prohibiting all corporal punishment of children by law, 1978-2018



Source: OECD (2019), *Trends Shaping Education 2019*, https://doi.org/10.1787/trends_edu-2019-en.

Social values evolve but discipline remains important

Use of corporal punishment in schools, once a mainstream practice to manage students' behaviour, is declining. But discipline and safety are evolving, not disappearing: they determine student participation and engagement during time spent at school and remain key foundations for student learning and well-being (OECD, 2019a; Gromada and Shewbridge, 2016).

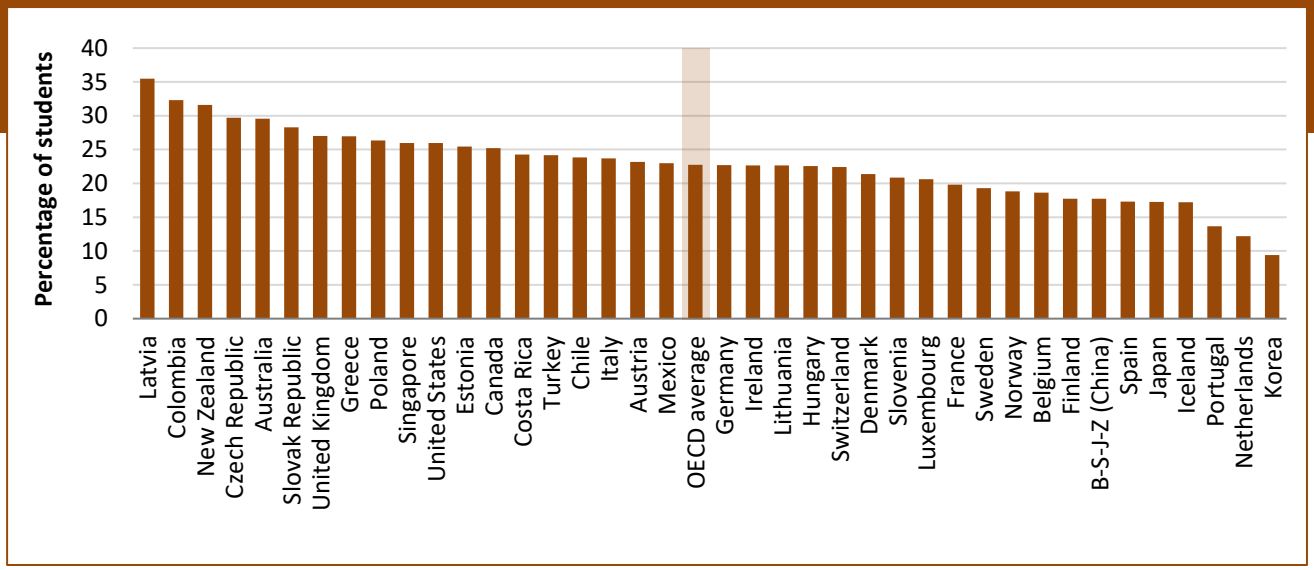
About 90% of parents across OECD countries consider school safety and the presence of an active and pleasant climate as important or very important when choosing a school for their child

Student (mis)behaviour hindering learning at school

Aggressive relations between students are a widespread safety concern. In the latest edition of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in 2018, an average of 23% of students reported being bullied at least a few times a month, most often boys and low-achieving students vis-à-vis girls and high-achievers. However, there is large variation across countries: while over 30% of students reported being bullied at least a few times a month in Colombia, Latvia and New Zealand, 15% or fewer did in Iceland, Korea, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Figure 2. The bullying bane across OECD countries

Percentage of students who reported being bullied at least a few times a month in PISA, 2018



Source: Based on Figure III.2.2 in OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

Bullying has many perverse effects, and how students perceive their life at school is crucial for their well-being. Students who are bullied experience more negative schooling experiences and report higher levels of negative feelings, such as sadness. Bullying is also associated with poorer academic performance, although negative relations with peers could be both a cause and consequence of low performance (OECD, 2019a).

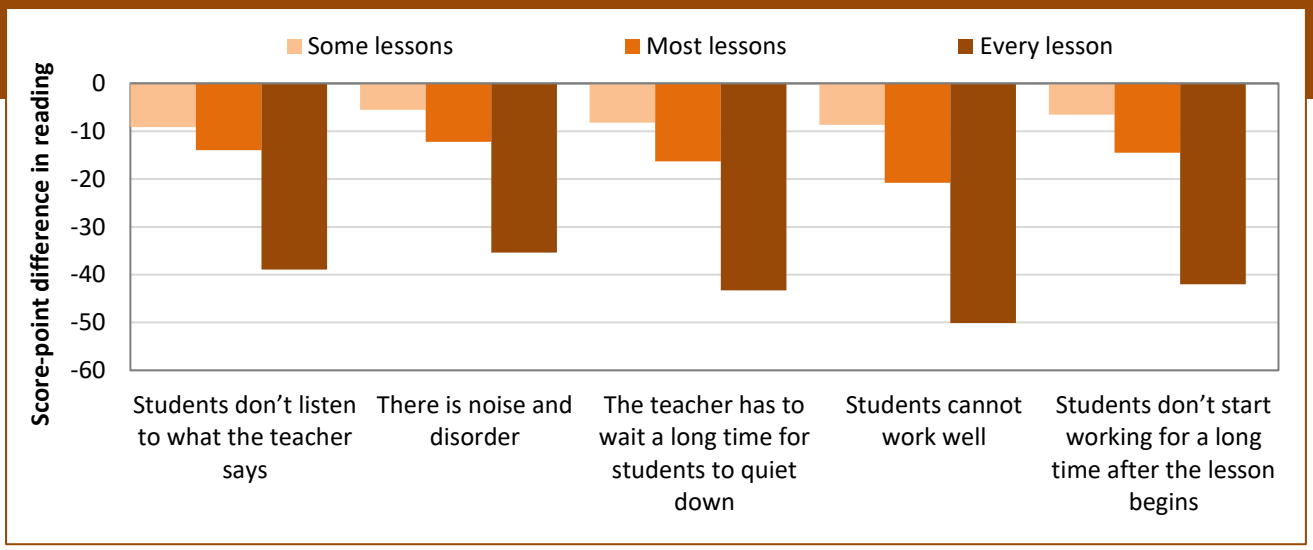
Bullied students are also more likely to report having skipped school. Students who valued school, enjoyed better disciplinary climate, scored higher in the reading assessment, and received greater emotional support from parents were less likely to have done so. Truancy has an impact on learning: on average across OECD countries, reading performance for those who skipped a whole day of school in the two weeks prior to the PISA test was 40 score-points lower than those who did not (the equivalent of over a year of schooling). Across countries, the negative impact of student truancy on performance was found to be largest in Iceland, Korea and Sweden (OECD, 2019a).

Disruptive behaviours in the classroom

Student misbehaviour (such as not listening to the teacher) can make lessons more difficult in classrooms. It can also have a negative impact on learning. As shown in Figure 3, students who reported constant levels of in-classroom disruption scored on average 30 points less on the PISA reading assessment than those who did not. The gap in performance grows to over 50 points between the students least and most likely to report that they cannot work well in every lesson.

Figure 3. Disciplinary issues and disruptions in the classroom

Student reports on disciplinary climate in the classroom and reading performance after accounting for economic, social and cultural status of students, 2018



Source: Figure III.3.3 in OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

Most classrooms are not badly behaved; teacher reports align with those of students on this (OECD, 2019b). Still, close to 20% of students in PISA 2018 reported that they could not work well in their classroom for most lessons. About 1 in 4 reported that the teacher often has to wait a long time for students to quieten down and that students do not start working for a long time after the lesson begins always or most often. About 30% reported that students do not listen to the teacher and that there is noise and disorder in every or most lessons. On average across OECD countries, disciplinary climate was reported to be more positive in schools more advantaged socioeconomically as well as in private schools (OECD, 2019a).

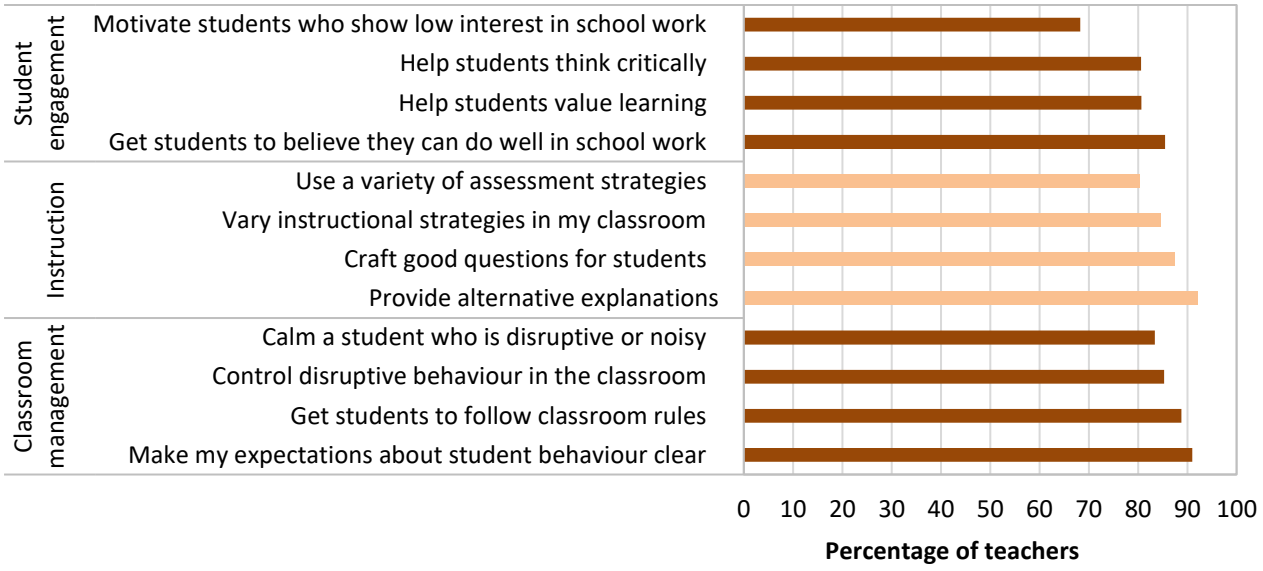
Maintaining discipline: The teacher perspective

Optimising learning time during lessons starts with the identification of two components: the behaviours that are desirable and the prevention of those that are not (Kunter, Baumert and Köller, 2007). Classroom rules and school disciplinary regimes serve this purpose and teachers and principals use them to set up clear behavioural expectations and define the actions that will be taken when students fail to meet them.

Most teachers feel confident in relation to their classroom management capacities. As shown in Figure 4, about 9 in 10 teachers feel confident in their ability to set up clear expectations for student behaviour and get students to follow classrooms rules. Furthermore, most teachers are confident about their instructional capacity – for instance, they feel they can provide students with good questions or alternative explanations when something is unclear – and their ability to allow learners believe they can do well in school and value learning.

Figure 4. How confident do teachers feel about their practice?

Lower secondary teachers who feel they can do the following "quite a bit" or "a lot", 2018



Source: Figure I.2.7 in OECD (2019), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

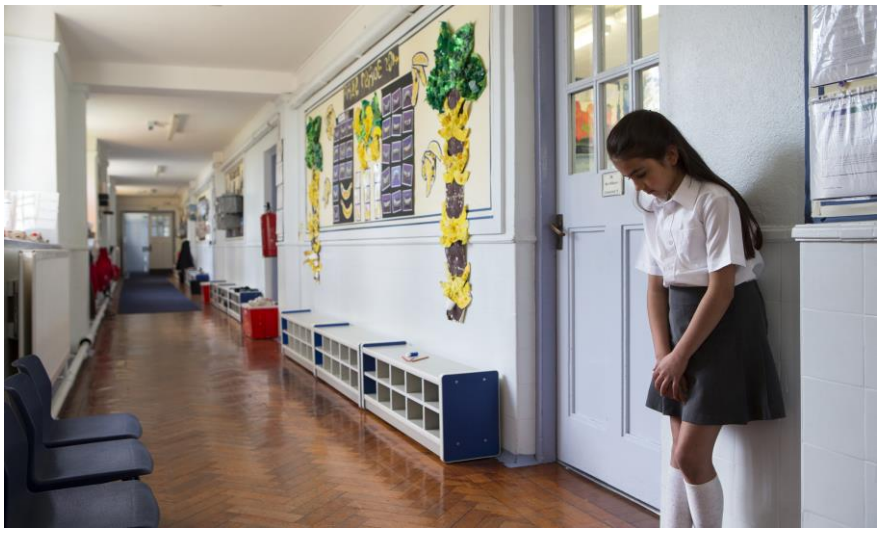
At the same time, Figure 4 shows that fewer teachers seem confident about their ability to calm students when they are disruptive, to adapt their instructional and assessment strategies and to motivate students who show low interest in school work. Hence, while teachers may be quite successful in keeping most of their students engaged, many may experience more difficulties in turning around challenging situations (OECD, 2019b). Clear disciplinary rules help, but addressing the roots of student misbehaviour has also to do with emotional and motivational factors, such as teacher-student relations, and broader but related pedagogical aspects, such as teachers' knowledge of teaching methods, students learning and assessment (OECD, 2019a).

Expulsion, detention and suspension

Teachers and other school staff may use reprimands when students behave poorly. These can often be verbal or written warnings when students talk in class, when they arrive late or skip classes with no justification. Disciplinary measures grow more serious in proportion to the seriousness of student misbehaviour.

School disciplinary regimes often utilise forms of exclusion, for example suspending or expelling students from classroom instruction and other activities in the broader school environment. The idea is to remove students with poor behaviour from the environment, hold them accountable for their actions and give them time to think and/or calm down while, at the same time, prevent any disruption to other students' learning.

In-school or on-campus suspensions are generally used to address minor deviations from rules, which may include insubordination, disturbing the classroom, or lack of cooperation with the teacher (Diem, 1988). A potential advantage of in-school suspensions is that, because students remain in the school premises, there is the option to engage them productively, for example, by addressing their specific academic or emotional needs (Blomberg, 2004).



In some cases, students may be suspended or expelled from the school entirely. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions represent a more severe degree of exclusion where students are removed from the school campus either for a limited period or permanently. In most cases, these measures are used when serious infractions occurred, such as violent misconduct (Lacoe and Steinberg, 2019). However, schools may also use these measures in response to relatively minor infractions, such as insubordination, tardiness, non-compliance, etc. (Skiba and Sprague, 2008).

In 2015, about 1 in 4 students studied in schools where the principal reported that student use of alcohol or illegal drugs hinders learning to some extent or a lot

Other measures may be put in place, such as the use of video cameras, identification chips and other surveillance tools (Lupton and Williamson, 2017). Schools and districts also adopt law-enforcement strategies, as in assigning police officers to schools (Legewie and Fagan 2019; Weisburst, 2019). These occur when student poor behaviour is perceived to be severe and there are concerns about public health, as with student using alcohol or illegal drugs. Another reason may be to ensure safety when there are concerns about gun violence.

Enough is not enough

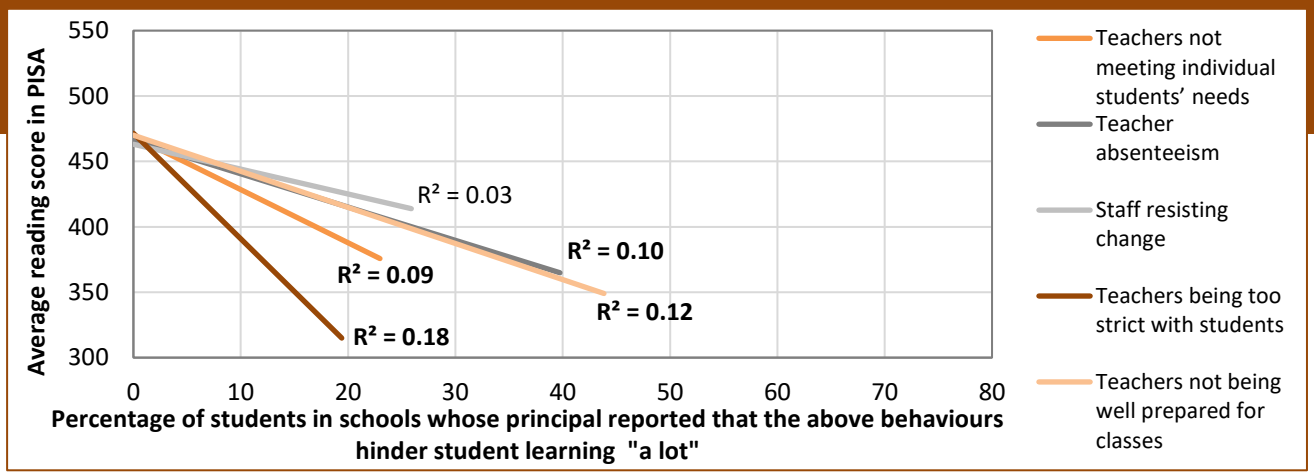
Exclusionary practices may bring quick discipline gains but they can also negatively affect students. Such practices may reduce their ability to build and practice self-regulation skills and negatively affect their relations with teachers (Bailey et al., 2019). Exclusionary policies can increase the frequency of absenteeism and grade repetition and lead to higher levels of early school leaving (Jia, Konold and Cornell, 2016). In some cases, they may increase the likelihood of engagement in illegal activity (Bennett, 2018). These problems come at a high cost for both individuals and society, and particularly for some student groups, such as socioeconomically disadvantaged students, who are often over-represented in schools with lower levels of safety and discipline (OECD, 2019a).

Clear rules are necessary for students to know how they should behave. Strict disciplinary regimes and inflexible implementation of rules, such as in cultures of "zero tolerance" and "no excuses" (Curran, 2016; Golann and Torres, 2018), can guarantee certain behaviours, such as bullying are not overlooked or minimised by teachers and other school staff. At the same time, if the application of rules is perceived as intransigent or unfair by students – because teachers would not listen to their views and reasons, for example – strictness may negatively affect teachers' legitimacy and diminish their authority before pupils.

Students internalise norms more easily if they feel these are being applied fairly (Gouveia-Pereira, Vala and Correia, 2017). Otherwise, they may feel psychological distress and internalise messages of worthlessness, with negative consequences for their learning. PISA 2018 observed the relationship between student learning and principals' perceptions of various teacher behaviours. Overall, the number of principals who reported that teachers being too strict with students hinders learning "a lot" was low (OECD, 2019a). Nevertheless, an analysis of these reports at the system level shows that it is significantly and negatively associated with student performance (Figure 5 below).

Figure 5. The harder way is not necessarily the better way

Teacher behaviour and average reading performance across countries and economies, 2018



Note: Results based on system-level analysis (77 countries and economies). Statistically significant associations (R^2) are marked in bold.

Source: Figure III.7.4 in OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

Building positive learning environments

Learning is not solely a cognitive activity. Learners work hard and engage in learning when the content is meaningful and interesting to them and they feel motivated (OECD, 2013). Students must be aware of what it is expected of them and, the support they need from teachers to feel competent to do it is equally important.

The importance of student motivation and emotional needs

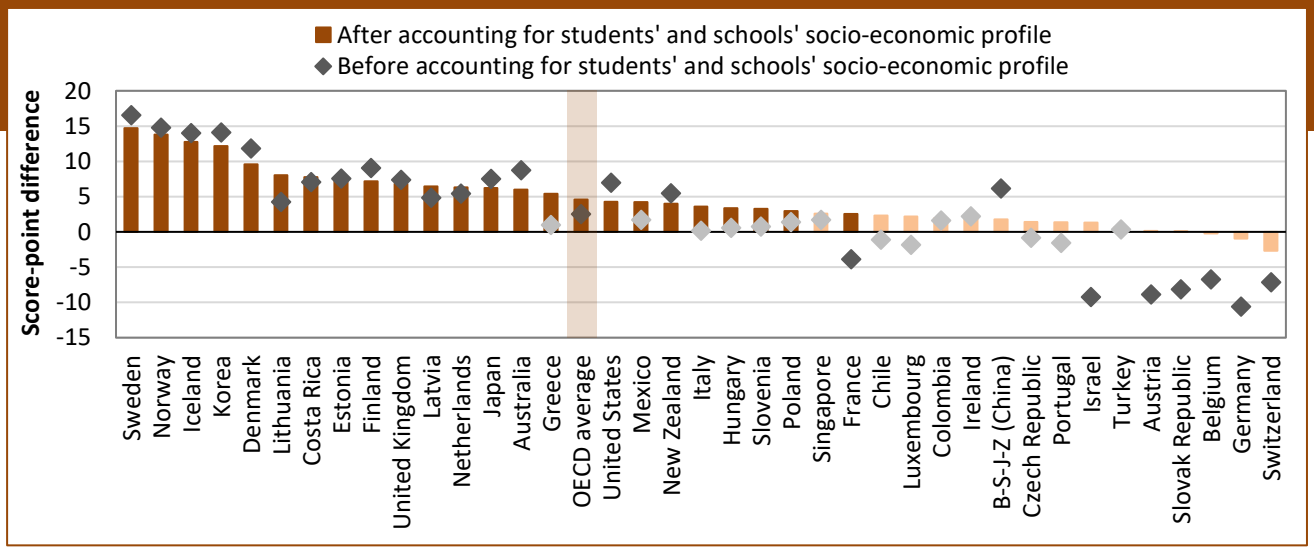
Setting up good communication with pupils and caring about what they feel and experience is a proactive way for teachers to prevent student misbehaviour. Students report more positive attitudes and higher academic motivation when they feel their teachers care about them, treat them fairly, provide help when needed and let them express opinions and decide for themselves. Yet, only 60-70% of students on average across OECD countries agree or strongly agree that their teachers transmit confidence in their ability, listen to their views on how to do things and understand them (OECD, 2019a).

Authoritative ≠ authoritarian: High behavioural expectations can be combined with warmth and responsiveness to achieve excellent results

Similarly, an average of about 70% of students in PISA 2018 reported that, in all or most lessons, their teachers show an interest in every student's learning, help students in their learning, give extra help when students need it and continue teaching until they understand. Figure 6 looks at combination of these reports and its association with student learning showing that, for each unit increase of the so-called PISA index of support, there is an associated increase of 5 score points in reading performance on average across OECD countries.

Figure 6. The importance of a supportive environment

Students' reports on the level of teacher support and reading performance in PISA, 2018



Note: Statistically significant differences are marked in a darker tone.

Source: Figure III.4.3 in OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

The association between emotional dispositions and learning outcomes suggests that getting to know pupils better can help teachers to foster more positive attitudes and behaviours and advance potential behavioural changes (e.g. pupils facing the divorce of parents). Teachers who intentionally set some time aside to work on their relationships with individual students and regularly show appreciation towards them, inquiring about their interests and proving constructive feedback are more likely to succeed in building disciplined classrooms and schools (Rhodes and Long, 2019).

Teachers' level of enthusiasm for teaching can be also supportive of a better climate for learning (e.g. Kunter et al., 2013). This refers to teachers' intrinsic motivation as either an experienced quality or displayed behaviour (Keller et al., 2016). Motivated teachers may attract students' attention more easily and convey their interest for the subject and learning more generally. PISA 2018 data show a positive relation between disciplinary climate and student motivation with teacher enthusiasm (as perceived by students) as well as between teacher enthusiasm and students' reading performance (OECD, 2019a).

Supporting students' social and emotional learning

'Mindful Moment' in Baltimore (USA)

Instead of being sent to the detention room, students that misbehave in an elementary school in West Baltimore, Massachusetts (USA), are paired with an instructor to speak about what happened and then fifteen minutes of exercises, such as meditation, take place. While these might seem like trivial changes, the results are anything but: there has been a decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals, and suspensions decreased from 4 in 2012 to 0 for the period 2013-16.

For more information: https://hlfinc.org/

Teachers can foster social and emotional learning in the school by teaching basic skills related to interacting with others and recognising and managing one's own emotions. Social and emotional learning can be integrated in regular classroom instruction and directed to all pupils. This may also be targeted at students with particular needs. Interventions may take place solely in the school environment or extend beyond it and involve other actors, such as parents (Chernyshenko, Kankaraš and Drasgow, 2018).

One way to support social and emotional learning is to reframe disciplinary actions as opportunities to learn. Engaging students in reflection about the causes and consequences of their behaviour following the breakdown of rules can help them in improving self-regulation. Furthermore, student misbehaviour can also be seen as a violation of a relationship, either among students or between them and other members of the school community. Under this perspective, reflection may involve all parts involved in a conflict, not just the offender, in carrying out a joint evaluation of a given situation and its potential solutions. Approaches such as restorative justice, peer mediation and youth courts (Gonzalez, 2012; Başak Adigüzel, 2015; Brasof and Peterson, 2018) build on this idea to not only resolve conflicts but to improve or rebuild trust relationships as well. Such approaches, however, are time-consuming and may take time away from other activities, such as lecturing in academic subjects (Augustine et al., 2018).

Disciplinary actions can be reframed as learning opportunities supporting students' self-regulation

Making the most of school resources

Schools provide education in different contexts and to students with diverging needs. Many countries organise their education systems to compensate for such differences, optimising school networks, decentralising decision-making powers and distributing financial and teaching resources according to local needs (OECD, 2018 and 2017).

Education systems also try to enhance teaching resources by means of teacher education and training provision. Teachers that are more knowledgeable provide higher quality teaching, which results in better student outcomes. Knowledgeable teachers are better classroom managers, constantly experiment new approaches to provide students with a thought-provoking instruction and are more attentive and responsive to the emotional needs of pupils (Ulferts, 2019; Lauermann, 2017).

Teacher education, recruitment and training must recognise teaching as an emotional practice

Most teachers report having had access to education and training on general and content-subject pedagogy, and many report having received pre-service and in-service education specifically on classroom management – 72 and 50% respectively (OECD, 2019b). However, despite the existing evidence on the crucial role motivations and emotions play in teaching and learning, the selection, training, evaluation and hiring of teacher candidates still often neglects affective and communicational factors (Guerreiro, 2017; OECD, 2019c). Communication skills can also be a key to resolve tensions arising from stakeholders' pressures, such as when parents interfere on the schools' staff professional discretion on behalf of students (Burns, Köster and Fuster, 2016).

These issues are especially important for novice teachers. They tend to be less confident about their practice and are over-represented in schools with a more disadvataged student body (OECD, 2019b). As in other professions, highly demanding personal and professional experiences are often the cause of distress and ultimately detrimental to job performance. Providing a "sheltered environment" in which early career teachers have sufficient time for reflection, professional experimentation and fluid communication with and mentorship from peers can be a good way to help them grow in their practice confidently and afirm their identity as teaching professionals (Paniagua and Sánchez-Martí, 2018).

Selecting teacher candidates (Australia)

In 2012, the University of Melbourne developed the Teacher Capability Assessment Tool (TCAT) as an evidence-based tool for selecting and developing entrants into their postgraduate teacher education programmes (OECD, 2019c).

The tool assesses a range of cognitive and non-cognitive domains associated with the successful completion of initial teacher programmes. It is composed of two core components: 1) informed self-selection (e.g. disposition, self-regulation, resilience in the face of challenge, communication, cultural sensitivity, self-awareness) and, 2) cognitive and non-cognitive skill assessment (numerical, verbal and non-verbal reasoning).

In addition, the TCAT has optional components: a structured behavioural interview and teaching demonstration. These involve a trained panel of interviewers who assess candidates in key research-supported areas such as interpersonal skills and behaviour under pressure. The teaching demonstration component involves candidates preparing and presenting a short lesson to a panel of assessors.

For more information: www.oecdteacherready.org/

Towards the future

A well-ordered environment in classrooms and schools is key to student learning and well-being. Addressing concerns such as bullying and student disruptive behaviour, is an important part of this. In addition, maintaining in-classroom and school decorum cannot be done without considering the central social and emotional component in teaching and learning dynamics as well as in life at school more generally. Practitioners need to recognise and leverage student motivations and emotions to address behavioural issues and enhance student learning.

Questions for future thinking

1. What are the possibilities and limits of software, bots and other potential technologies in supporting schools and teachers when considering the central role emotions and motivation play in learning?

2. Student attendance and punctuality may be soon monitored via smart, connected devices automatically (i.e., Internet of Things). To what extent and when should different users (teachers and other school staff, parents, governments) have access to these data?

3. Artificial Intelligence may also soon facilitate the recognition and monitoring of students' emotional status, and advance behavioural responses on the basis models informed by big data. What are the risks of such potential developments?

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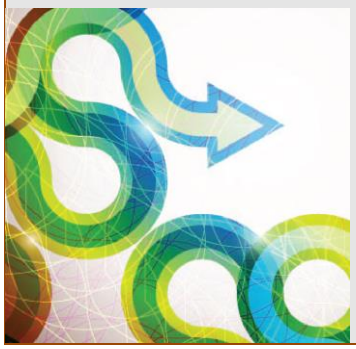

Contact **Marc Fuster Rabella (marc.fusterrabella@oecd.org)**

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