

What do you expect?
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[Experience](#)



What do you expect? A teacher's high or low expectations can wield a profound influence on students. What is the first thing that happens on the first day of school when your new students take their seats? Usually it's the first impressions that come into your mind as you eye-up each student that walks into your classroom: "This girl looks happy to be in school, she must be really bright". This boy is daydreaming already, he's going to be difficult to deal with". Or what about the teacher conversations that happen in the teachers' lounge?

For example, "her last year math teacher mentioned that she was a troublemaker". It is in our human nature to make positive and negative judgements. Some factors that can influence how we see a child may include: A child's appearance, socioeconomic status, language capacity, past performance, etc. What we as teachers don't always realize, is that these early assumptions can often predict the future. Labeling our students is easy. The students we label "gifted" may succeed, while the students labeled "mischief" or "under-achiever" may not.

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The question is, how much influence do we as teachers have on these outcomes? Researchers Rosenthal and Jacobson wanted to answer this very question. In 1968 they launched a study known as, "Pygmalion in the Classroom", that would have a huge impact in field of education. In the study, Rosenthal and Jacobson told teachers that they would be working with students targeted for their tremendous intellectual capacity. However, the reality was that these students were actually chosen randomly. The targeted

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students performed at a higher level than other students of equivalent ability.

The study concluded that “ the teachers’ high expectations significantly influenced student performance”. This further concluded that, setting high expectations for all students is a goal worth obtaining. The Pygmalion study helps us to understand, that by setting high expectations, teachers can play a huge role in determining student achievement. However, the study does not explain how these expectations, whether positive or negative, are expressed from one student to the next. A 1987 study conducted by Brophy and Good observed teacher-student interaction and concluded that teachers may unconsciously send messages to low achievers.

Brophy and Good commented, “ Low achievers often receive insincere praise, less feedback, and more criticism. In addition, these students tend to be called on less often and given less time to respond” (Gazin, 2004). So it seems that even the best-intentioned teachers may be sending subtle prompts with a message that says they don’t expect much from certain students. Students will easily pick up these cues, and respond accordingly. Instead of labeling our students, teachers can strive to build a classroom environment in which every child is important, challenged, and expected to succeed.

Special education students are the primary victims of such labeling. We as teachers need to set high expectations from day one. Every student deserves to start the year with a clean slate. We need to send a message to each and every one of them that they are all important as individuals. Once students feel valued by simple things, such as eye contact, and perhaps a <https://assignbuster.com/what-do-you-expect-a-teachers-high-or-low-expectations-can-wield-a-profound-influence-on-students/>

friendly greeting, they will be much more likely to live up to the high expectations set before them. We need to have a positive attitude about our students. Students can truly sense when a teacher believes in him or her.

You can start the year by making it clear to them that, if they do the work that is required, they will certainly succeed. High expectations can be reinforced with rewards during the year. For example, a student who completes a consecutive number of homework assignments during the marking period may earn a free homework pass. There are numerous ways to reward our students for a job well done. We can use tangible along with non-tangible rewards, when needed. Just as adults need to be appreciated, so do children. Even the classroom setup can send positive messages to specific students.

Instead of placing troubled students in the back of the room where they are often forgotten, we should put them right in the front row. This sets high expectations for all students in the classroom, and that they all must and can participate. As teachers, we have the ability to set the bar high and watch our students climb. If you believe that a child can't learn, then maybe he won't. But if you challenge them enough, encourage and tell them they can do it, you may be surprised to see that they will meet the high expectations you placed before them, and become very successful.