

Teacher Effects on Social/Behavioral Skills in Early Elementary School

Jennifer L. Jennings
Columbia University

Thomas A. DiPrete
Department of Sociology
Columbia University

Abstract

Though many recognize that social and behavioral skills play an important role in educational stratification, no studies have attempted to estimate teachers' effects on these outcomes. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study — Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS- K), we estimate teacher effects on social and behavioral skills as well as on academic achievement. Teacher effects on social and behavioral skill development are sizeable, and are somewhat larger than teacher effects on academic development. Because — as we show — social and behavioral skills have a positive effect on the growth of academic skills in the early elementary grades, the teachers who are good at enhancing social and behavioral skills provide an additional indirect boost to academic skills in addition to their direct teaching of academic skills. Like previous studies we find that observable characteristics of teachers and the instructional approaches utilized in their classrooms are weak predictors of teacher effects. However, our results suggest that the teachers who produce better than average academic results are not always the same teachers who excel in enhancing social and behavioral skills.