

What makes great teaching?

Review of the underpinning research

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1. (Pedagogical) content knowledge (Strong evidence of impact on student outcomes)

The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant impediment to students' learning. As well as a strong understanding of the material being taught, teachers must also understand the ways students think about the content, be able to evaluate the thinking behind students' own methods, and identify students' common misconceptions.

2. Quality of instruction (Strong evidence of impact on student outcomes)

Includes elements such as effective questioning and use of assessment by teachers. Specific practices, like reviewing previous learning, providing model responses for students, giving adequate time for practice to embed skills securely and progressively introducing new learning (scaffolding) are also elements of high quality instruction.

3. Classroom climate (Moderate evidence of impact on student outcomes)

Covers quality of interactions between teachers and students, and teacher expectations: the need to create a classroom that is constantly demanding more, but still recognising students' self-worth. It also involves attributing student success to effort rather than ability and valuing resilience to failure (grit).

4. Classroom management (Moderate evidence of impact on student outcomes)

A teacher's abilities to make efficient use of lesson time, to coordinate classroom resources and space, and to manage students' behaviour with clear rules that are consistently enforced, are all relevant to maximising the learning that can take place. These environmental factors are necessary for good learning rather than its direct components.

5. Teacher beliefs (Some evidence of impact on student outcomes)

Why teachers adopt particular practices, the purposes they aim to achieve, their theories about what learning is and how it happens and their conceptual models of the nature and role of teaching in the learning process all seem to be important.

6. Professional behaviours (Some evidence of impact on student outcomes)

Behaviours exhibited by teachers such as reflecting on and developing professional practice, participation in professional development, supporting colleagues, and liaising and communicating with parents.
