
Connections between teacher perceptions of school effectiveness and student outcomes in Idaho's low-achieving schools

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Key findings

This study examined the survey responses of teachers from 75 Idaho schools working on school improvement. The schools with higher teacher reports of the presence of the goals, processes, and supports essential for student success did not have higher rates of reading proficiency, math proficiency, or attendance.

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Summary

Policymakers and practitioners frequently use teacher surveys to inform decisions on school improvement efforts in low-achieving schools. But there is little empirical evidence on how the results of these surveys relate to student outcomes. This study provides information on how perception data from a teacher survey in Idaho is correlated with three student outcomes: reading proficiency, math proficiency, and attendance.

The Idaho State Department of Education uses the Educational Effectiveness Survey (EES), an annual teacher survey developed and administered by the Center on Educational Effectiveness, to gather information on school qualities believed to be the goals, processes, and supports essential for school success. Used widely in the Northwest Region, the survey is similar to teacher perception surveys used nationally. This study covers the 75 low-achieving Idaho schools that used the state's school improvement services and took the EES in 2012.

The analyses of the survey data revealed that teachers' perceptions of the presence of essential goals, processes, and supports were generally not related to reading proficiency, math proficiency, or attendance. A few significant relationships were found in subsamples of schools. For example, the essential support defined in the survey as "effective school leadership" was significantly related to reading proficiency in 2011 in the 33 schools with data for 2010, 2011, and 2012. A significant positive relationship was also found between school attendance in elementary schools in 2012 and teacher ratings of five of nine other essential goals, supports, and processes.

The weak relationship between teacher perceptions on the EES and student outcomes does not support the use of the EES as an indicator of academic progress in Idaho's low-achieving schools, particularly not as the sole indicator. Other uses of perception data from the EES—such as measuring teacher satisfaction with school environments—may be useful for practitioners but were not examined in this study.

The findings suggest that Idaho educators and others using teacher perception surveys should proceed cautiously in making decisions based on perception surveys. For example, researchers and policymakers should consider how well survey measures relate to desired student outcomes and provide useful information on the effectiveness of school improvement efforts. They might also consider using data from other sources to assess the school goals, processes, and supports they seek to investigate through teacher surveys.