

Study: Teachers play key role during school closure to keep students motivated

July 14 2023



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Teachers play a key role when it comes to making students feel seen, confident and motivated during forced school closings. The importance of emotional support is greater than teachers realize. Combined with

high-quality online instruction, it makes vulnerable students participate better in classes. Also, it makes students feel more at home in school and increases their self-confidence.

These findings have emerged from research on the effects of the COVID-19 school closure on the school adjustment (motivation, [self-confidence](#), feeling at home at school) of youth with and without migration backgrounds and of high vs. [low socioeconomic status](#) (SES), lead by developmental psychologist Jessie Hillekens of Tilburg University. She also researched how to counteract any negative effects.

By chance, the researchers involved collected data one week before the first school closure, followed by another measurement during the school closure and one year after (when schools reopened). The findings are published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

The researchers found that school closure widened the gap in motivation, self-confidence and feeling at home in school between youth with no migration background. This gap narrowed again when schools reopened. For SES, the effects were less, but there were also indications that reopening schools boosted feeling at home at school for youth with lower subjective SES. The main finding is, teachers play a key role by providing [students](#) with support and high quality online instruction during school closure, especially also for vulnerable students.

The study was conducted among Flemish adolescents between 12 and 14 years old (in the first two years of high school). It is expected that similar patterns can be found among Dutch adolescents, based on previous research, as well as among older adolescents.

The research shows that it is important to provide more practical support, such as reviewing assignments. It shows that teachers also do this more with vulnerable students and that this also has positive effects.

On the other hand, it is essential to give more emotional support as well. But we see that [teachers](#) do this less often with vulnerable learners. This lack of [emotional support](#) actually negates the positive effect of practical support. It is important to create awareness of both types of support and their importance for students during [school](#) closure.

More information: Jessie Hillekens et al, How School and Home Contexts Impact the School Adjustment of Adolescents from Different Ethnic and SES Backgrounds During COVID-19 School Closures, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s10964-023-01772-z](#)

Provided by Tilburg University

Citation: Study: Teachers play key role during school closure to keep students motivated (2023, July 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-07-teachers-play-key-role-school.html>

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