

# How Can Behavior Affect Academics for Students?

by Van Thompson, Demand Media



Academic achievement isn't always an absolute measure of a student's intelligence. Instead, a variety of factors, such as teacher involvement, parental investment, school quality and student motivation, can affect academic life. Student behavior also plays a major role in academic achievement. A student's behavior can affect her ability to learn as well as other students' learning environment.

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## Disruptive Behavior

Students who behave disruptively by bullying other students, talking during lectures or by requiring the teacher to interrupt lessons to discipline them can have a negative effect on an entire classroom. A 2010 study published in "American Economic Journal: Applied Economics" found that disruptive students can lower the test scores and academic achievement of an entire classroom. Teachers who have disruptive students in their classroom may have to spend additional time on behavioral management, reducing the time the teachers spend teaching.

## Impulse Control

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## Academic Success Among Students at Risk for School Failure

Neurologists Sam Wang and Sandra Aamodt argue in their book "Welcome to Your Child's Brain" that impulse control is one of the most significant factors predicting academic success. Students with poor impulse control have more difficulty motivating themselves to study, do homework and listen in class. This can decrease their ability to excel academically, even when they perform well on IQ and achievement tests. Wang and Aamodt emphasize that rule-setting and teaching frustration tolerance play critical roles in helping children develop impulse control.

## **Student Motivation**

Even the best teachers can't force a student to learn if the student is completely unmotivated. Student motivation can determine whether a student studies or does her homework, whether she seeks additional help when she needs it and how carefully she listens in class. A 2006 paper published in "Annual Review of Psychology" emphasized the role that student motivation plays in learning and found that unmotivated students tend to perform more poorly. The textbook "Child Psychology" cites research from developmental psychologist Albert Bandura indicating that children who are internally motivated are more likely to excel than children who require external motivation in the form of punishments and rewards.

## **Mental Health Disorders**

Learning disorders and mental health problems such as attention deficit disorder, dyslexia, autism and oppositional defiant disorder can dramatically affect student behavior. Students with oppositional defiant disorder, for example, struggle to accept authority and may frequently defy teachers and parents, according to "Child Psychology." Students who need mental health interventions, occupational therapy or psychoactive drugs may behave poorly in class even when teachers have excellent classroom control. This can affect these students' ability to learn, and students with some disorders may be unable to achieve good grades in typical classrooms.

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### **About the Author**

Van Thompson is an attorney and writer. A former martial arts instructor, he holds bachelor's degrees in music and computer science from Westchester University, and a juris doctor from Georgia State University. He is the recipient of numerous writing awards, including a 2009 CALI Legal Writing Award.

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