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Pygmalion in the Classroom

Rosenthal and Jacobson, ISBN 978-1904424062

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When first published in 1968, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* was received with almost universal acclaim for its ground breaking research. The "Pygmalion Phenomenon" is the self-fulfilling prophecy embedded in teachers' expectations. Simply put, when teachers expect students to do well and show intellectual growth, they do; when teachers do not have such expectation performance and growth are not as encouraged and may in fact be discouraged in a number of ways. Research suggests that our expectations strongly influence the performance of those around us from the members of our football team to the students in our classes. In the Oak School experiment discussed in this book teachers were led to believe that certain students, selected at random, were likely to be showing signs of a spurt in intellectual growth and development. The results were startling. At the end of the year, the students of whom the teachers had these expectations showed significantly greater gains in intellectual growth than did those in the control group.

What could the teacher have been doing to encourage/enable student development and success?

What could the teacher have been doing to discourage/disable student development and success?

Use the following categories for your discussion....

1. Use of language
2. Level of risk taken in activities/teaching
3. Opportunities for independent learning
4. Teacher's vocabulary
5. Questioning
6. Conversations about learning

The concept of the self fulfilling prophecy

Four key principles:

- We form certain expectations of people or events
- We communicate those expectations with various cues
- People tend to respond to these cues by adjusting their behaviour to match them
- The result is that the original expectation becomes true, this creates a circle of self-fulfilling prophecies