



DO TEACHERS' EMOTIONS SHAPE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS?

What New Research Says About Teacher Emotional Competence

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WHAT RESEARCH FOUND

Teachers are often encouraged to use effective instructional strategies to support inclusive education, but this systematic review argues that **how teachers understand and manage emotions is equally important**. The researchers reviewed **18 empirical studies** published between 2010 and February 2025 to examine how teachers' emotional competence influences inclusive education. The review focused on K–12 teachers and explored emotional competence through four closely related dimensions: **emotional intelligence, emotional awareness, empathy, and emotion regulation**.

The findings show that teachers with stronger emotional competence are better able to build positive teacher–student relationships, create supportive classroom climates, and manage diverse learning needs. Students in these classrooms demonstrate higher engagement, stronger motivation, improved emotional self-regulation, and better academic outcomes. The review also found that emotionally competent teachers are more effective at classroom management and are better prepared to respond to students with disabilities and special educational needs (SENs). However, the impact of emotional competence may differ depending on the type of disability or learning need, suggesting that no single emotional approach fits every learner.

The authors conclude that emotional competence should become an integral part of teacher education and professional development. While teachers are frequently trained in curriculum design and instructional methods, they receive far less preparation in recognising emotions, regulating stress, demonstrating empathy, and maintaining emotionally supportive learning environments. Strengthening these competencies can improve both teacher well-being and student inclusion.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Inclusive classrooms depend on more than effective lesson planning. Students are more likely to participate, take learning risks, and develop confidence when teachers respond with empathy, emotional awareness, and calm, consistent support. Emotional competence therefore becomes an essential professional skill, not simply a personal characteristic.



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CLASSROOM REALITY

Teachers Aim For	Students Often Need
Positive classroom relationships	Teachers who understand emotional needs
Effective classroom management	Calm and predictable responses
Inclusive participation	Empathy and encouragement
Academic success	Emotional safety alongside instruction

TRY TOMORROW

During your next lesson:

1. Observe how students respond emotionally during learning activities.
2. Pause before reacting to challenging behaviour and consider possible underlying causes.
3. Use encouraging language that acknowledges effort as well as achievement.
4. End the lesson by reflecting briefly on one interaction you handled well and one you would approach differently next time.

CAUTION

Emotional competence is **not** simply being kind or avoiding discipline. Effective teachers combine empathy with clear expectations, appropriate boundaries, and consistent classroom routines that help all students feel secure while supporting learning.

ONE KEY TAKEAWAY

Teachers' emotional competence strengthens inclusive education by creating classrooms where students feel understood, supported, and ready to learn.

Keywords: emotional competence, emotional intelligence, empathy, emotion regulation, inclusive education, teacher–student relationships, special educational needs

Reference:

Calandri, E., Mastrokourou, S., Marchisio, C., Monchietto, A., & Graziano, F. (2025). *Teacher Emotional Competence for Inclusive Education: A Systematic Review*. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(3), 359.