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All Eyes on the Nerd?
The Unequal Distribution of Teachers' Attention*

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Abstract

Teachers play a central role in shaping how students benefit from peers, yet little is known about how classroom composition affects their attention-allocation decisions. We conduct a large-scale randomized experiment using realistic classroom vignettes to assess how teachers engage with students under varying scenarios and objectives. The presence of a high achiever reduces the likelihood that teachers engage with a low achiever by about 8%, with substantially larger effects when teachers prioritize task success, consistent with convenience-based decision-making. Using administrative data, we show that low achievers perform worse when quasi-randomly assigned to a classroom with an exceptional student.

Keywords: teacher behavior, attention allocation, randomized controlled trial, educational inequality, peer effects

JEL Classifications: I21, I28, C93, D91, J24

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Teachers play a foundational role in shaping students' academic trajectories (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014; Hanushek, 2011). Their influence extends well beyond standardized test performance (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004) and affects a broad spectrum of cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Carlana, 2019; Denessen, Keller, van den Bergh, & van den Broek, 2020; Zhu, 2024). A growing body of work suggests that such effects arise not only from teachers' instruction but also from the broader set of interactions and behaviors that teachers foster (Goulas, Megalokonomou, & Sotirakopoulos, 2025). Blazar and Kraft (2017) and Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) support this perspective and argue that all aspects of classroom activity may be tied to teacher effects. Despite this recognition, we know relatively little about the micro-level decisions teachers make within the classroom, and especially how they allocate their attention across students.

The available evidence suggests that teachers devote more attention to low-achieving students (Zhang, Wang, Ribeiro, Demszky, & Loeb, 2025), yet it remains unclear how classroom composition shapes these attention-allocation decisions. Teachers may adjust their instruction based on the ability mix of their students. If teachers prioritize high over low performers, the presence of high achievers may draw instructional attention away from low achievers. Conversely, if teachers prioritize low over high achievers, the presence of low achievers may make teachers less likely to assign learning tasks to high achievers. Such competition for instructional attention has direct implications for the effects of academically talented classmates, which are typically posited to improve others' academic outcomes (Carrell, Fullerton, & West, 2009; Duflo, Dupas, & Kremer, 2011; Garlick, 2018; Hoxby, 2000).

In this paper, we conduct a large-scale randomized experiment to investigate whether—and why—teachers allocate their attention differently depending on the ability composition of their classroom. Specifically, we examine whether the presence of a high-performing student affects teachers' engagement with lower-performing students. We design a novel survey-based experiment in which teachers are presented with stylized classroom vignettes that feature three students of different academic ability levels—*high*, *average*, and *low*. The vignettes vary in group ability composition, with each containing at least two ability levels. Teachers are then asked to select one student to perform a classroom task across four distinct tasks, with each task evaluated under four alternative pedagogical objectives. In total, each teacher makes 16 individual decisions. We exploit exogenous variation in classroom composition to estimate whether the presence of a *high achiever* reduces the probability that a *low achiever* receives the teacher's attention. We complement our experimental evidence with qualitative insights into the traits teachers associate with different student types, as well as their own attention-allocation practices and justifications.

To establish a descriptive benchmark, we collect qualitative data on teachers' attention-

allocation practices. Our content analysis shows that about half of teachers report treating all students equally, while over 40% say they focus primarily on *low* achievers, in alignment with prior work (Zhang, Wang, Ribeiro, Demszky, & Loeb, 2025). But does this hold when the composition of the classroom changes? When we vary student composition experimentally, we find that teachers systematically shift their attention away from *low achievers* when *high achievers* are present. On average, a *low achiever* is 4 percentage points—about 8% of the baseline probability—less likely to be selected for a task when grouped with a *high achiever*. This difference is larger and statistically significant when teachers prioritize task success, but smaller and not statistically significant when their goal is student growth. The pattern is especially pronounced in the scenario of distributing copies, suggesting that teachers may delegate tasks requiring reliability to academically stronger students. Supporting this interpretation, teachers' qualitative descriptions frequently portray *low achievers* as "inattentive" or "noisy," while *high achievers* are described as "responsible" or "diligent."

Our approach overcomes several limitations of both observational studies and field experiments. First, it enables us to directly observe teachers' attention allocation decisions—something rarely measurable in an actual school setting or traditional experiments (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Zhang, Wang, Ribeiro, Demszky, & Loeb, 2025). Second, randomizing the group composition in the vignette across participants, while keeping the classroom tasks and objectives constant, introduces exogenous variation in classroom composition without altering the instructional context. In contrast, observational and field studies typically cannot manipulate either peer composition or the pedagogical context in a controlled way, which causes teachers' attention patterns to be entangled with unobserved factors.

Our findings contribute to two strands of the literature on how classroom composition affects student achievement. First, we highlight a previously underexplored pathway for potential ability spillovers in the classroom. Empirical research has extensively explored the impact of peers with higher academic ability on student achievement (Carrell, Fullerton, & West, 2009; Duflo, Dupas, & Kremer, 2011; Garlick, 2018; Goulas, Gunawardena, Megalokonomou, & Zenou, 2024; Hoxby, 2000). Peer effects extend well beyond the classroom, shaping behaviors such as crime (Glaeser, Sacerdote, & Scheinkman, 1996); smoking (Christakis & Fowler, 2008); and obesity (Christakis & Fowler, 2007). Peer effects are also critical in policy debates around student tracking (Cortes & Goodman, 2014; Dustmann, Puhani, & Schönberg, 2017; Figlio & Page, 2002). While much of the peer effects research focuses on student-to-student mechanisms—effort matching, information sharing, co-study, and norm setting—far less attention has been paid to how teachers respond to classroom composition (Burke & Sass, 2013; Sacerdote, 2011). Our findings indicate that teachers systematically reallocate attention away from low achievers when a high achiever is present, a finding that reveals a new teacher-driven channel for peer effects. An implica-

tion of our results is that peer effects may also operate through teachers' attention allocation decisions.

Second, by showing that *high achievers* are prioritized by teachers, especially for tasks that may be less academically oriented but helpful to the teacher, we contribute to the literature on how students' relative rank within the classroom shapes their outcomes. This line of research builds on the "big fish in a small pond" hypothesis (Marsh & Parker, 1984), which posits that being higher-ranked among lower-achieving classmates can have lasting beneficial effects on academic performance, confidence, aspirations, and educational decisions. Empirical studies indeed show that higher academic rank positively affects subsequent academic performance, educational attainment, field of study (Carneiro, Cruz-Aguayo, Salvati, & Schady, 2023; Denning, Murphy, & Weinhardt, 2023; Elsner & Isphording, 2017, 2018; Elsner, Isphording, & Zölitz, 2021; Megalokonomou & Zhang, 2024; Murphy & Weinhardt, 2020; Pagani, Comi, & Origo, 2021); major choice (Delaney & Devereux, 2021; Goulas, Griselda, & Megalokonomou, 2024); and future earnings (Del Bono, Holford, & Sartori, 2025; Denning, Murphy, & Weinhardt, 2023). Thus, teacher attention in teacher-assisting tasks may act as an amplifying mechanism, reinforcing the elevated status of high performers.

We complement our experimental results with an empirical analysis using administrative test-score data from a representative sample of a large number of public high schools in Greece. This analysis examines whether the presence of an exceptional student affects the outcomes of low-achieving students, and allows us to assess whether the teacher attention-allocation decisions documented in the experiment translate into real learning effects. We find that low achievers perform significantly worse when they are randomly assigned to a classroom with an exceptional student. This pattern is consistent with the attention-allocation mechanism suggested by our experimental findings, in which exceptional students draw instructional attention away from their lower-achieving peers.

Our study also relates to the broader literature on teacher decision-making and differential treatment of students, and emphasizes a distinct mechanism from the work on teacher bias (Carlana, 2019; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Goulas, Megalokonomou, & Sotirakopoulos, 2025; Zhu, 2024). Prior research shows that teachers' gender or racial stereotypes can shape their expectations of students (Carlana, 2019; Zhu, 2024), and in turn influence academic trajectories. Our findings suggest that differential treatment can arise even in the absence of prejudice—emerging instead from teachers' responses to contextual cues. When tasks are framed as requiring responsibility or careful execution, teachers systematically prioritize *high achievers*, whereas when the objective is student learning, they show greater willingness to engage *low achievers*.

The growing availability of increasingly rich data will allow future researchers to observe teacher–student interactions directly—such as the utterance-level evidence in the insightful

work by Zhang, Wang, Ribeiro, Demszky, and Loeb (2025)—and deepen our understanding of classroom dynamics. The present study can serve as a blueprint for future work of this kind, underscoring our finding that classroom composition is a key determinant of teacher behavior. It also highlights the delicate balance in teachers' roles: Their attention can be pedagogical, aimed at supporting learning, but also managerial, directed toward minimizing disruption and streamlining task completion.

1 Experimental Design

We designed a randomized, online, survey-based experiment to investigate how teachers adjust their attention toward students depending on student academic strength levels and the academic strength composition within the classroom. The survey was disseminated to all K-12 schools in Greece in the spring of 2025 and targeted teachers across primary, middle, and high schools. We received 1,166 completed responses. Participant recruitment was facilitated by school principals, who were asked to forward the survey link—hosted on the Qualtrics platform—to their teaching staff. To incentivize participation, we pledged a donation of €0.50 to a philanthropic foundation of each respondent's choosing for every completed survey. The study was pre-registered and received ethical approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

To introduce exogenous variation in classroom composition, we randomly assigned each teacher to a classroom vignette, with each depicting a group of three students of the same gender. We used three student profiles: a *high achiever* (type A), an *average achiever* (type B), and a *low achiever* (type C). A description of the academic and behavioral traits of each fictional student profile was included in every vignette. We constructed seven unique groupings—ABC, AAB, AAC, ABB, ACC, BBC, and BCC—to ensure that each includes at least two student types. We introduced gender variation by replicating these seven combinations using two sets of male and female student names, yielding a total of 14 vignettes. Examples of the ABC groups for girls and boys are shown in Figure 1. In Appendix C, we provide the English translation of the survey (Appendix C.1) and the original full set of vignettes for girls (Figure C1) and boys (Figure C2). Each participating teacher was randomly assigned to view one of these vignettes. At the beginning of the survey, we collected data on teachers' demographic characteristics, subject specializations, educational backgrounds, and pedagogical philosophy.[1]

We adopted a deliberately positive framing in labeling student profiles in the questionnaire: The *high achiever* was introduced as *exceptional*, the *average achiever* as *very good*,

[1] To capture attitudes toward ability-based prioritization, we asked teachers to allocate up to 10 points between two statements: an "egalitarian" statement ("As an educator, I want to invest in all students equally") and an "elitist" statement ("As an educator, I want to invest in those students who can benefit the most").

and the *low achiever* as *somewhat good*. To ensure that teachers clearly understood the differentiation, we asked them to describe each student profile using a few adjectives at the end of the survey. We analyze the reported adjectives using word clouds, which we present in Figure B1, in Appendix B. We find that *exceptional* students are frequently described as "responsible," "consistent," "perfectionist," "goal-oriented," and "hardworking." *Very good* students are described as "responsible," "diligent," and "hardworking." It is clear that the main difference between how teachers characterize *exceptional* and *very good* students lies in the use of stronger adjectives—most notably "perfectionist" and "goal-oriented"—which mark these students as qualitatively different. By contrast, *somewhat good* students are portrayed as showing limited effort or being disruptive, with common descriptions including "noisy" and that they "do not try."[2]

Following the vignette and a short description of the students, teachers were presented with a series of classroom tasks (scenarios) and asked to select one of the three students to perform each task. Each task was paired with a specific pedagogical objective. The four tasks were: *participating in the afternoon theater club*, *distributing copies to the entire class*, *reading a paragraph from a textbook aloud*, and *solving an exercise at the blackboard*. For each task, teachers made their selection from four objectives: To *perform the task responsibly*, *perform the task successfully*, *benefit the rest of the class*, and *benefit the student performing the task*. This resulted in a total of 16 permutations per respondent (4 tasks $\times$ 4 objectives). All scenarios were designed to reflect common classroom practices and ensure that the experiment remained grounded in teachers' everyday professional experience.

This experimental design offers two key advantages. First, it enables us to causally identify how changes in classroom composition—specifically, the presence or absence of high-achieving peers—affect teacher decision-making, a source of variation that is difficult to observe in naturally occurring settings. Second, our setup examines teacher decisions across task scenarios that differ in the level of academic strength they demand.[3] For instance, distributing copies to classmates requires little academic proficiency, whereas solving an exercise on the blackboard constitutes a more cognitively demanding task. This granularity provides insight not only into whether teachers adjust their focus based on student ability, but also into the conditions under which such adjustments occur. Specifically, examining whether teachers are more inclined to engage *low achievers* in activities of differing academic intensity sheds light on the nature and distribution of learning opportunities made available to these students.

[2] For the *high achiever* (A), we state: "Anna/Giorgos is an exceptional student and has impeccable conduct." For the *average achiever* (B): "Maria/Marios is a very good student who rarely fails to pay attention." For the *low achiever* (C): "Eleni/Kostas is a somewhat good student, but tends to get distracted during class." The full survey is included in Appendix C.

[3] Tasks such as participation in the theater club primarily foster creativity, collaboration, and social engagement rather than academic performance or cognitive ability. Consequently, they are less likely to generate academic peer effects than classroom-based instructional activities (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).

The demographic characteristics of participating teachers, as shown in Table A1, closely align with national statistics, and thus support the representativeness of our teacher sample (Eurostat, 2023a). In particular, the average age of teachers in our sample is 50 years, with a median of 51; this closely reflects national figures in Greece, in which 51% of teachers are aged 50 or older. Women make up 73% of our sample, compared with 67% nationally, which places our sample more in line with the gender composition observed in other countries (Eurostat, 2023b; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2023).

2 Empirical Strategy

2.1 Empirical Specification

We estimate the average effect of the presence of a *high achiever* (A) in the group on the likelihood that the teacher selects a *low achiever* (C) for a given task–objective combination in the experiment. The main specification is as follows:

$$C_{ijs} = \alpha + \beta P_i + \gamma G_i + X_i\theta + \epsilon_{ijs}, \tag{1}$$

where C_{ijs} is a binary outcome that equals 1 if teacher i chooses student type (C) for objective j, in scenario s; P_i is a treatment indicator that equals 1 if the student group assigned to teacher i includes student type (A); G_i is the gender indicator for the student group assigned to teacher i (1=girls); X_i are teacher-level covariates: Age, years since obtaining their bachelor's degree, years since their first teaching appointment, and a value for their egalitarian pedagogical philosophy. The covariates vector X_i also includes indicators for teachers' gender (male, female, other, prefer not to say); educational attainment (high school diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD); whether they studied abroad; teaching field (humanities, STEM, preschool or primary education, or other); and prefecture fixed effects.[4] ϵ_{ijs} is an error term at the individual level. We cluster standard errors at teacher level to account for within-teacher correlation across student profile choices (Arellano, 1987; Liang & Zeger, 1986; White, 1980).

2.2 Randomization Checks

Essential for our identification is that the vignette randomization balanced participant characteristics across treatment arms. We confirm that respondents' observable characteristics are not associated with the probability of being exposed to student profiles (A), (B), or (C). We estimate the following specification:

[4] Prefecture of residence is derived using the information provided by the survey platform (Qualtrics), which records the geographical coordinates of the respondents. These coordinates are then matched to one of the 51 prefectures in Greece.

$$P_{ip} = \alpha + \beta X_i + \gamma_p + \varsigma, \tag{2}$$

where P_{ip} is a set of treatment indicators that equal 1 if the group of students viewed by teacher i includes student profile (A), (B), or (C). Vector X_i captures teacher characteristics: Age, gender (male or female); educational attainment (bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD); whether they studied abroad; and teaching field indicators (humanities, STEM, preschool or primary education, or other); γ_p captures prefecture fixed effects and ς is the error term.

Tests of statistical significance of estimated parameters $\hat{\beta}$ from specification (2) assess whether the survey platform successfully randomized treatment assignment. As shown in Table A2, teacher observable characteristics are largely unrelated to the treatment (i.e., the presence of a *high*, *average*, or *low* achiever). Results remain robust when controlling for prefecture fixed effects. Our main specification (1) further includes respondent characteristics to capture any residual imbalances.

3 Results

We study how students' academic ability shapes competition for teachers' attention. In particular, we examine how the presence of a *high achiever* (A) in the classroom affects the likelihood that a teacher chooses to focus on a *low achiever* (C) for various tasks and objectives. On the one hand, higher-achieving students may be easier to teach, which potentially tempts teachers to concentrate their attention on them (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Lavy & Schlosser, 2011). On the other hand, lower-achieving students may have the greatest need for teacher support (Zhang, Wang, Ribeiro, Demszky, & Loeb, 2025). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to systematically vary group composition, along with tasks and objectives to isolate the impact of high achievers on teacher attention to low achievers. The question of how the presence of high achievers affects the attention teachers allocate to low achievers is policy-critical for several reasons. First, debates on ability-mixing policies frequently hinge on claims about whether high achievers help or hinder their lower-achieving peers, which makes it essential to understand potential attention trade-offs (Betts, 2011; Duflo, Dupas, & Kremer, 2011). Second, the distinction between high- and low-achieving students is typically more salient and measurable than finer gradations of performance, and thus enables more precise policy targeting and clearer implications for intervention design (Lavy, Silva, & Weinhardt, 2012).

3.1 Overall Results

In Figure 2, we present the share of teachers who select a specific student across vignettes, which measures the attention an individual student type receives. The top panel shows the treatment groups, which include all the student groups that include the *high achiever* (A) and the *low achiever* (C)—ABC, AAC, and ACC. Groups AAC and ACC capture the relative saliency effects of student types (A) and (C), respectively, when the *average achiever* (B) is removed from ABC and replaced by a student of type (A) or (C). Together, the treatment groups reflect the average teacher attention directed to student types (A) and (C), accounting for saliency effects. The middle panel shows the control groups, BBC and BCC. They serve as the ideal control conditions for the treatment groups: They exclude student type (A); they include all other student types, namely, (B) and (C); they are of equal size (three students each); and they represent alternative saliency weightings of depicted student types (B) and (C), and provide a balanced benchmark when aggregated.

Comparing teacher attention allocation decisions across treatment and control groups allows us to identify how the presence of student (A) affects the probability that the teacher selects student type (C) for a given task and objective. In the baseline group ABC, in which all student types are present, type (C) receives the most attention and is chosen in 39% of cases, followed by type (A) at 35% and type (B) at 26%. The strong baseline pull of type (A) implies that its removal frees up attention that must be redistributed across the remaining students. When (A) is absent, student type (C) absorbs a disproportionate share of this shift, substantially increasing its likelihood of being selected.

Our baseline estimates, presented in the left bar of Figure 3, capture the difference in the share of teachers selecting student type (C) between treatment and control groups across all tasks and objectives. We find an approximately 4 percentage point, statistically significant reduction in the likelihood of choosing (C) in the treatment group. This is equivalent to an 8% decrease in probability relative to the control group. This suggests that, overall, teachers are more likely to direct their attention to *high achievers* (A) when they are present, at the expense of *low achievers* (C).

Table A3 shows that our estimates remain unchanged when we include scenario and objective fixed effects. The results are likewise robust when we re-estimate them using an alternative data structure with one observation per teacher, as shown in Table A4. We further show that our results are robust to controlling for potential saliency effect of students of types (A) and (C). In Table A5, we augment specification (1) with dummies that take the value one if type (A) students and type (C) students are present twice in the block. The coefficients remain similar to those in our main estimates.

A further robustness check—reported in Table A6—modifies specification (1) by examining how the presence of (A) affects the probability that the lowest-performing student in

the group is chosen, whether (B) or (C). The estimated coefficient remains similar in magnitude, although it becomes slightly less precise. This supports our interpretation that the presence of (A) reduces attention to the relatively weakest student in the group, not only to the absolute lowest performer. Finally, we investigate the impact of the presence of (C) on the attention type (A) receives. The estimates in Table A7 find no statistically significant impact, which suggests an asymmetric pattern of attention competition.

3.2 Mechanisms

Our design captures teacher choices under different objectives, which can be grouped into two categories. The first category includes objectives aimed at task success: [i] Perform the task responsibly and [ii] perform the task successfully. The second category includes objectives that are beneficial to students: [i] Benefit the other (students) and [ii] benefit the student (performing the task). Examining how teacher attention shifts away from lower-achieving students when higher achievers are present across these different objectives allows us to shed light on the motivations behind teachers' decisions and identify the underlying mechanisms of attention allocation decisions.

The two rightmost bars of Figure 3 show the estimated difference in the share of teachers selecting student (C) between the treatment and control groups, separately for objectives related to task success and objectives that aim to benefit students. For objectives that target task success, the probability of selecting student (C) significantly decreases by nearly 6 percentage points when student (A) is present in the classroom. In contrast, for objectives that benefit students, the estimated difference is smaller—around 2 percentage points—and not statistically significant.

These results suggest that considerations related to task success dominate in teacher allocation decisions: Teachers may be more likely to rely on academically stronger students when task success is the primary concern. This pattern is less pronounced when the goal is to foster learning. A likely driver of these results may be concerns about teacher convenience (Aydin & Ok, 2022). It may be reasonable, from the teacher's standpoint, to engage with higher-achieving students—for whom following instructions may be easier—more consistently, and especially so when the goal is task success. Supporting this interpretation, text analysis of the adjectives teachers use to describe each student type shows that high achievers are often described as "responsible," "perfectionist," and "diligent," as shown in Panel A of Figure B1.

Next, we examine teacher decisions across task scenarios and learning objectives. Panel A of Figure 4 plots the estimated difference in the share of teachers selecting student (C) between groups with and without student (A), disaggregated by task scenario and learning objective. Our estimates are reported in Table A8. Overall, the impact of the presence of a *high achiever* on the attention a *low achiever* receives is negative across scenarios. When

the objective is student learning, the estimated effect is generally not statistically different from zero, with one exception: In the exercise scenario, we find a significant negative impact of more than 4 percentage points. When the focus shifts to task success, the estimated effect is negative and statistically significant in scenarios that involve distributing copies, reading aloud, and solving an exercise. In particular, attention to low-achieving students falls by roughly 9 percentage points when distributing copies and by about 6 percentage points when reading aloud, both significant at the 5% level. For the exercise task, the estimated reduction is approximately 5 percentage points, although the coefficient is less precisely estimated; it is significant at the 10% level. The smallest effect arises in the scenario that involves joining the theater club, where the estimates are statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Panel B of Figure 4 formally tests the difference in the estimates between objectives focused on task success and those focused on student progress in various scenarios. We find that the distributing-copies scenario yields the largest gap (difference $= 0.082$, $p = 0.030$). In the reading aloud, theater club, and solving an exercise scenarios, we find larger estimated declines under the objectives focused on task success relative to those under objectives focused on student progress, but the differences are not statistically significant.[5] The breakdown by student gender in Table A10 shows that boys primarily drive the effects in the distributing-copies and reading-aloud scenarios when the objective is task success. In contrast, Table A11 indicates that for girls, the estimated impacts are negative and of comparable size across scenarios that focus on task success, although imprecise.

To help interpret these patterns, it is useful to consider that teachers often make choices based on what is most convenient in managing the classroom. From this perspective, minimizing disruption and streamlining task completion becomes an important consideration. Teachers' descriptions of lower-achieving students as "noisy" and "indifferent" help explain why, when task success is the priority, they shift attention toward higher achievers, who are viewed as more "responsible" and "perfectionist" (Panels C and A of Figure B1). These students impose fewer management demands and allow teachers to complete tasks with minimal interruption. Yet even when the objective is students' academic development, teachers continue to select high achievers for the most academically demanding task (solving an exercise), which suggests that convenience and anticipated ease of interaction remain influential factors in their decisions.

Given the role of classroom manageability in shaping instructional decisions, teachers' attention-allocation patterns may vary by the gender of the student depicted in the vignette (Zhang, Wang, Ribeiro, Demszky, & Loeb, 2025). Prior research shows that girls tend to display more agreeable, compliant, and disciplined behavior than boys, which makes them easier to manage in structured settings (Bertrand & Diop, 2021; Figlio, Guryan, Karbownik,

[5] Similar patterns emerge in Table A9, which reports estimates disaggregated by both scenario and objective.

& Roth, 2014; Whitmire, 2010). Motivated by this, we estimate the parameters of interest separately for boys and girls. Table A12 shows that, for boys, the result is primarily driven by the *distribute-copies* task when the objective involves completing the task successfully or responsibly. For girls, the results in Table A13 indicate that although finer disaggregation reduces the precision of the estimates, the overall pattern remains aligned with the full-sample findings. Table A14 finds that the effects for boys and girls are of comparable magnitude.

3.3 Heterogeneity Analysis

We examine heterogeneity in teachers' attention-allocation decisions in Figure A1. We find pronounced and statistically significant effects among less-egalitarian teachers—those scoring below the median on the pedagogical philosophy index, which captures teachers' willingness to prioritize students who can benefit the most (also shown in Table A16). Estimates for female teachers are similar in magnitude to those for male teachers but show lower variance, leading to statistical significance.[6] We also detect statistically significant effects among teachers with higher qualifications, those who did not study abroad, teachers in preschool or primary education, and younger teachers (in both age and tenure), consistent with results in Tables A17 and A18. At the same time, formal tests of differences across teacher characteristics reveal no statistically significant heterogeneity.[7]

3.4 Empirical Evidence

We provide external validation of the link between the performance of low achievers and the presence of academically stronger students in the classroom. If the presence of academically stronger students draws teacher attention away from weaker students, a natural question is whether this translates into lower academic performance for the weaker students. To investigate this, we use administrative student-level data from a sample of 125 high schools in Greece. The sampled schools closely match national distributions of student and school characteristics (Table A21). A distinctive feature of the Greek school system is that students are assigned alphabetically to classrooms at the start of grade 10 (Goulas, Griselda, & Megalokonomou, 2023, 2024; Goulas, Griselda, Megalokonomou, & Zenou, 2024; Goulas, Gunawardena, Megalokonomou, & Zenou, 2024), which generates quasi-random variation in the ability mix of students within each class.

This setup allows us to interpret differences in performance between low performers in classrooms with and without exceptional students as causal. We measure starting performance using Fall exam scores in mathematics and Greek language, and we define excep-

[6] Table A15 further examines teacher–student gender combinations and finds no significant differences.

[7] Tables A19 and A20 implement an alternative approach using interaction terms between the treatment and teacher characteristics. The results remain robust.

tional students flexibly as those in the top 5%, 10%, or 15% of the full-sample distribution. Our outcome of interest is the end-of-year performance of students in the bottom 30% of the starting-performance distribution. This allows us to mirror the experimental design that estimates the effect of the presence of an exceptional student on the outcomes of lower achievers. The empirical specification includes school-by-cohort fixed effects and controls for class size. Table A22 validates the balance of student characteristics across classrooms with and without exceptional students.

Panel A of Table 1 reports our main results. Across all definitions of exceptional students, we find that the presence of at least one exceptional student in the classroom has a negative and statistically significant effect on the academic performance of weaker students. Low-performing students in such classrooms score lower on end-of-year exams than observationally similar peers in classrooms without an exceptional classmate. This result is consistent with the mechanism suggested by our experimental evidence: Academically stronger students may draw a disproportionate share of teacher attention, which reduces the instructional support available to weaker classmates. Panel B of Table 1 shows that the results remain robust when we use an alternative specification that examines how the share of high achievers in the classroom affects the performance of weaker students.

3.5 Insights from Teachers' Qualitative Responses

To complement our experimental evidence, we also examine teachers' own accounts of their attention-allocation decisions and their rationales using inductive qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2004). We ask teachers to explain which type of student they tend to focus their instructional efforts on—*high*, *average*, or *low* achievers—and why. Teachers' free-text responses provide valuable insights into everyday practice and the motivations that underlie instructional attention decisions. We show in Figure B2 the share of teachers who report focusing their instruction on specific student types, and include "everyone" as an additional category. Roughly half of the respondents report considering equally every type of student, and only 10% of teachers report focusing either on *average* or *high* achievers. More than 40% of teachers claim that they primarily focus on *low* achievers.

In Table B1, we report the results of our qualitative analysis of the rationales presented by teachers. Panels A, B, and C show the top three justifications for teachers who report focusing on *high*-, *average*-, and *low*-achieving students, respectively. Panel D shows the top three justifications for teachers who report focusing on everyone equally. Teachers who focus their attention on *high achievers* state that these students require attention to prevent them from losing interest and to continue their development. Meanwhile, teachers who prioritize *low achievers* argue that it is important to encourage effort, sustain motivation, and help these students improve their performance. The primary reason more than 40% of teachers report low-achieving students as the main focus of their attention is that these

students need additional support in their learning journey. This suggests that a large share of teachers perceive their role as compensatory, and thus, they direct attention toward those who are at risk of falling behind. Among teachers who report focusing on all types of students, appeals to fairness and the importance of accessibility to their instruction for different academic strength levels are common. A detailed list of all justifications provided can be found in Tables B2–B5.

4 Conclusion

Previous research suggests that teachers may play a crucial role in amplifying or dampening peer effects (Burke & Sass, 2013). Our study offers a new perspective on how classroom composition shapes teacher behavior and, by extension, the dynamics of peer effects. We design an experiment that treats teacher behavior not as a hidden confounder but as a central mechanism that links peer composition to personalized student attention. By experimentally varying the ability composition of otherwise identical learning groups, we isolate teachers' attention-allocation decisions from confounding influences such as student demographics or classroom-specific unobservables.

Our results indicate that teacher attention to *low achievers* is often compromised by the presence of *high achievers*, particularly when considerations of teacher convenience dominate. Consequently, academically weaker students may receive fewer learning opportunities in mixed-ability settings. In contrast, academically stronger students are more likely to be assigned teacher-supportive tasks, which potentially boosts their confidence and reinforces their classroom status. From a policy perspective, if teacher attention is reallocated toward high achievers in mixed classes, assignment rules might need fairness constraints or rotation protocols to mitigate inequalities.

These findings contribute to two strands of the literature. First, this study highlights the role of teachers as central mediators of ability spillovers in the classroom, as discussed in the peer-effects literature (Burke & Sass, 2013; Garlick, 2018): Academically strong peers draw teacher attention away from weaker students. Second, our findings support the behavioral channel discussed in the rank literature, in which higher-ranked students have improved later outcomes (Del Bono, Holford, & Sartori, 2025; Goulas, Griselda, & Megalokonomou, 2024; Megalokonomou & Zhang, 2024; Murphy & Weinhardt, 2020; Pagani, Comi, & Origo, 2021).

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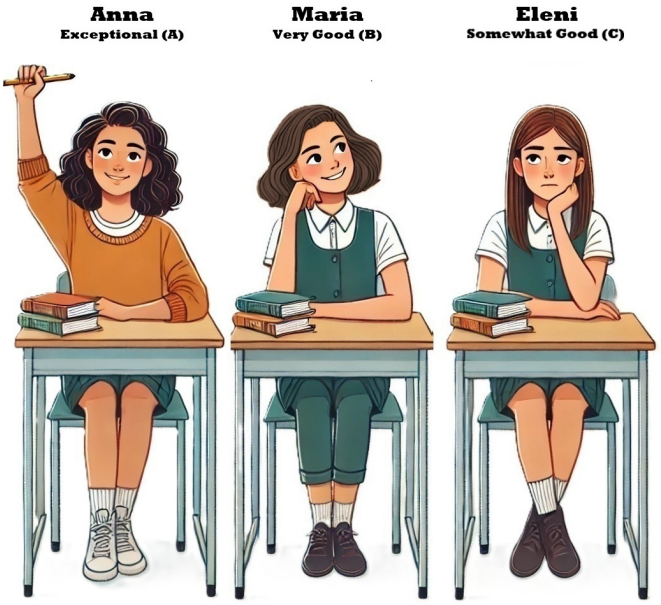
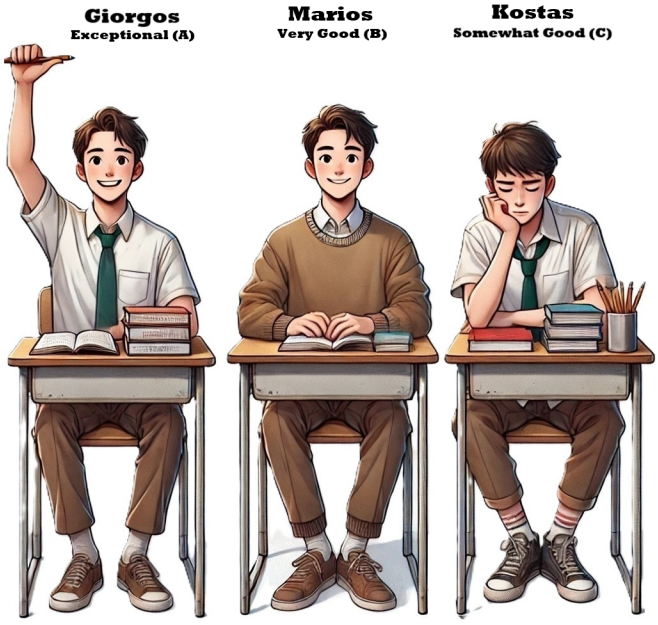
Figure 1: Example of Survey Images for the Girls and Boys Groups

Panel A: Girls



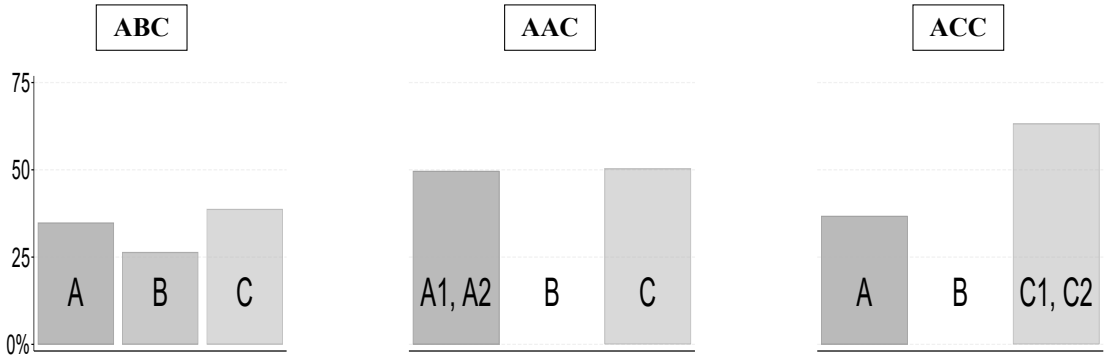
Panel B: Boys



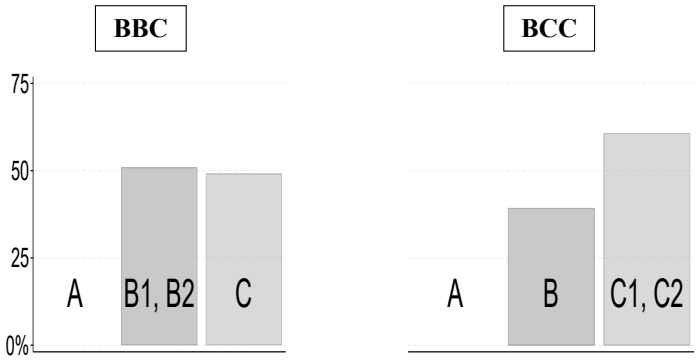
Notes: The figure shows two examples of the 14 vignettes we presented to the surveyed teachers for girls (Panel A) and boys (Panel B). In each vignette, there is a *high achiever* (A), *average achiever* (B), and *low achiever* (C). The full set of vignettes can be observed in Figures C1 and C2 in Appendix C. Student names and ability descriptions have been translated to English.

Figure 2: Survey Design Structure

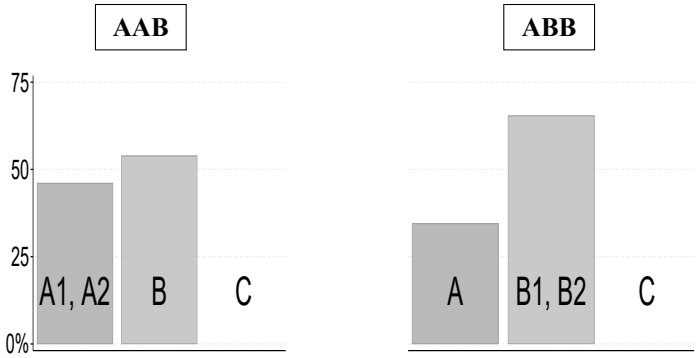
Treated Groups: The *High Achiever* (A) is in a Group with the *Low Achiever* (C)



Control Groups: The *High Achiever* (A) Is not in a Group with the *Low Achiever* (C)

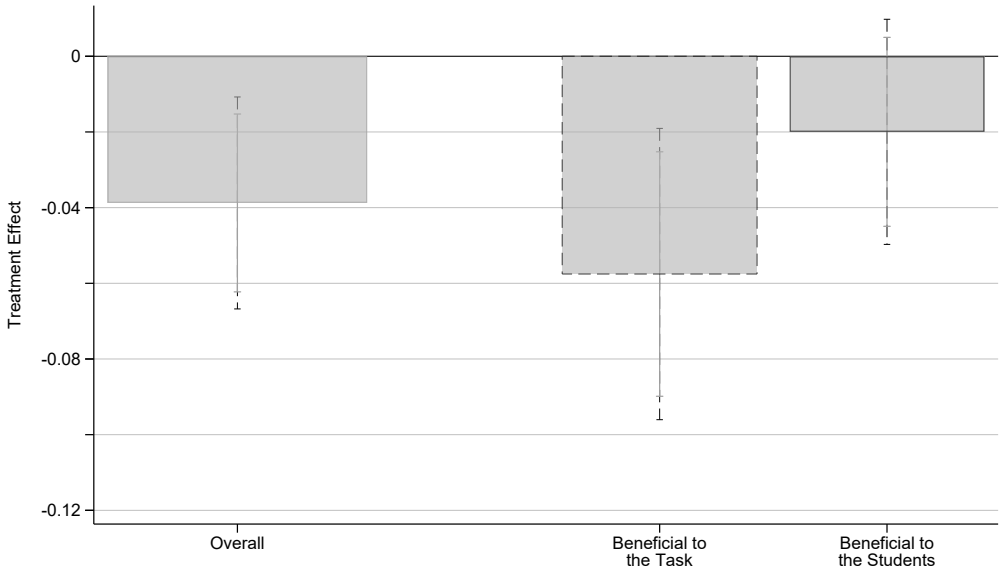


Excluded Groups: The *Low Achiever* (C) Is not Present



Notes: The figure shows all possible combinations of student ability profiles (A), (B), and (C), as they are presented in the experimental vignettes. The upper panel shows treated groups, the middle panel control groups, and the lower panel groups that are not used in the main analysis.

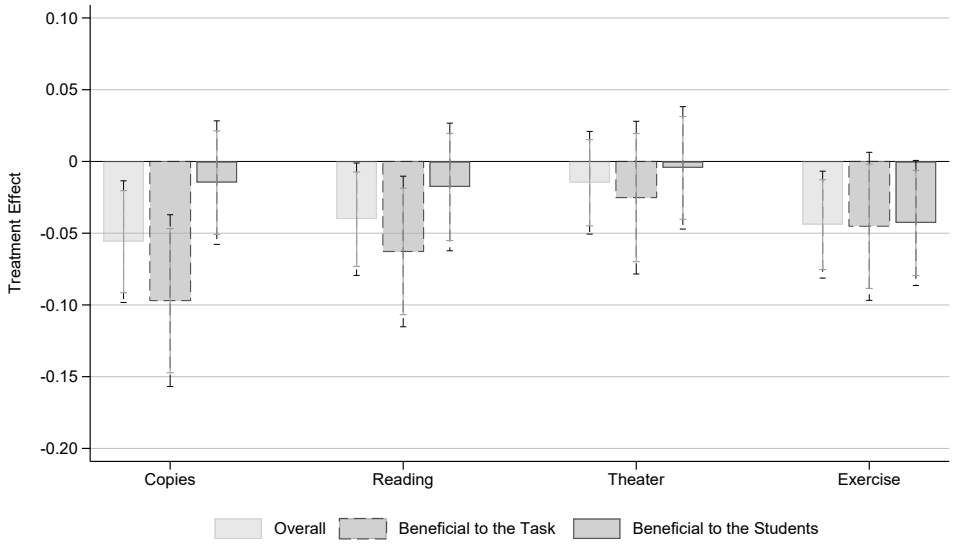
Figure 3: Effect of the Presence of *High Achievers* (A) on Choosing the *Low Achiever* (C), Overall and by Objective



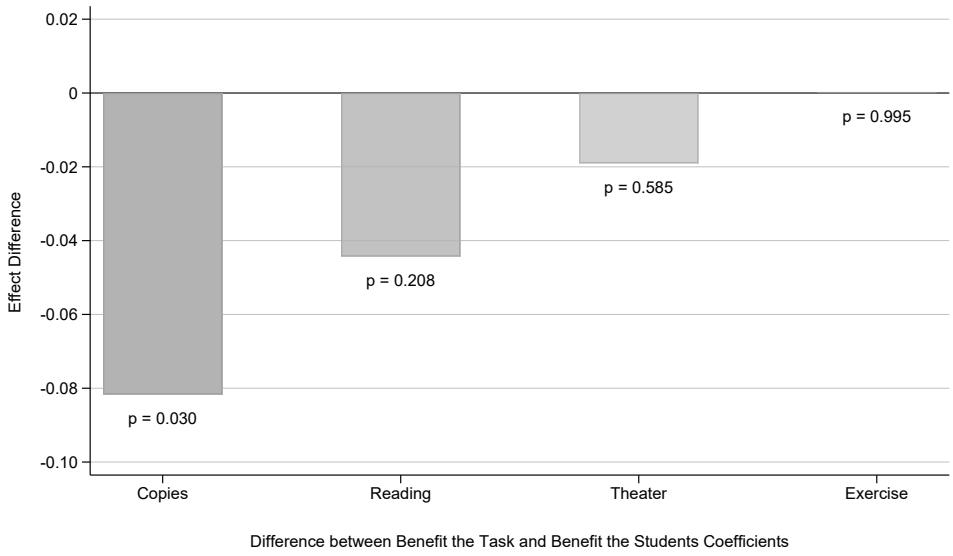
Notes: The figure shows the estimated probability of choosing student (C) when student (A) is present in the group. We estimate it for the whole sample ("Overall"), and then separate into two categories based on the possible objectives of the task. "Beneficial to the Task" includes the two objectives "Done Successfully" and "Done Responsibly" (dashed bar); "Beneficial to the Students" includes the two objectives "Beneficial to the Other Students" and "Beneficial to the Student Executing the Task" (solid bar). We include confidence intervals at the 90% (dark gray and solid) and 95% (black and dashed) significance level. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, gender of the student shown in the vignette, objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level.

Figure 4: Mechanism Analysis

Panel A: Effect by Aggregated Objectives and Scenarios



Panel B: Net Differences by Scenario



Notes: The figure shows the estimated probability of choosing student (C) when student (A) is present in the group. We do that for the whole sample ("Overall"), then separate into two categories based on the possible objectives of the task. "Beneficial to the Task" includes the two objectives "Done Successfully" and "Done Responsibly" (dashed bar); "Beneficial to the Students" includes the two objectives "Beneficial to the Other Students" and "Beneficial to the Student Executing the Task" (solid bar). We include confidence intervals at the 90% (dark gray and solid) and 95% (black and dashed) significance level. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, gender of the student shown in the vignette, objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level.

Table 1: Effect of Exceptional Classmates on the Performance of Students in the Bottom 30%

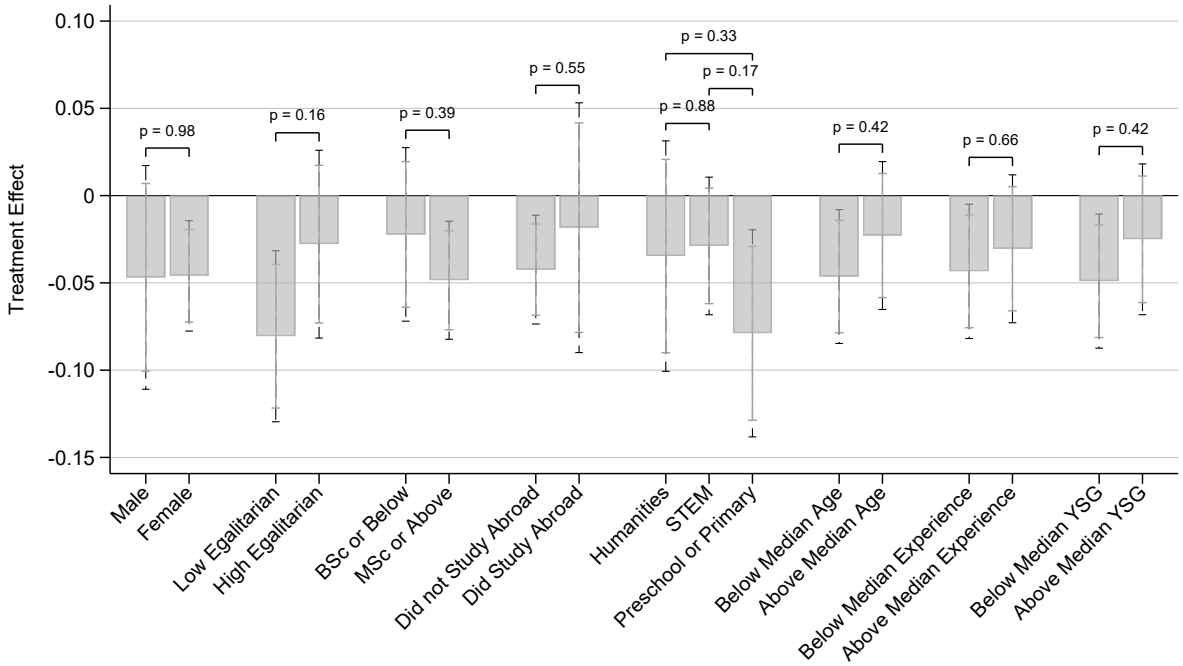
	Exceptional Student Definition Definition			
	Top 5%	Top 15%	Top 5%	Top 15%
	Mathematics		Language	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A: Effect of the Presence of the Exceptional Classmates			
Exceptional Student Present	-0.052	-0.039	-0.061	-0.107
	[0.000]	[0.010]	[0.001]	[0.000]
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Observations	0.376	0.815	0.448	0.825
X Mean	0.484	0.388	0.497	0.380
	Panel B: Effect of the Share of Exceptional Classmates			
Share of Exceptional Students	-0.675	-0.500	-0.724	-0.554
	[0.000]	[0.000]	[0.000]	[0.000]
	0.126	0.076	0.172	0.096
Observations	70,770	70,770	69,777	69,777
X Mean	0.031	0.105	0.041	0.127
X SD	0.053	0.092	0.064	0.115
Y Mean	-0.034	-0.034	-0.021	-0.021
Y SD	0.963	0.963	0.918	0.918
School Cohort FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Controls include class size and student characteristics (starting performance, gender, and year of birth). Standard errors are clustered at school cohort level. Our data covers years between 2003 and 2015. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Supplementary Appendix

A Appendix A: Additional Quantitative Analyses

Figure A1: Heterogeneity Analysis



Notes: The figure shows the heterogeneity analysis for the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) if the *high achiever* (A) is in the group along the following dimensions: Gender of the teacher (male or female), teachers' egalitarian attitude (above or below median, excluding extreme values), teachers' education level (BSc or below or MSc or above), whether the teacher studied abroad (yes or no), teachers' field (humanities, STEM, preschool or primary education), teachers' age (above or below median) teachers' experience (above or below median), and teachers' years since graduation (above or below median)(YSG). We report, above each pair of categories, the p-values from t-tests comparing the corresponding coefficients. We include confidence intervals at the 90% (dark gray and solid) and 95% (black and dashed) significance level. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level.

Table A1: Teacher Demographic Characteristics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Age (years)	49.86	9.44	25	77	1,166
Experience (years)	20.49	11.13	0	55	1,166
Years Since Graduation (years)	26.84	9.79	2	53	1,166
Pedagogical Philosophy					
Egalitarian	7.79	2.47	0	10	1,166
Elitist	2.21	2.47	0	10	1,166
	Percentage		Frequency		N
Gender					1,166
Female	73		853		
Male	26		301		
Undisclosed/Other	1		12		
Education					1,166
High School Diploma/Other	0		5		
BSc	33		384		
MSc	59		686		
PhD	8		91		
Study Abroad					1,111
Yes	22		240		
Field					1,166
Humanities	56		652		
STEM	19		224		
Preschool or Primary	21		249		
Other	4		41		

Notes: The table shows summary statistics on the demographic characteristics of surveyed teachers. Demographics include teachers' age; years since obtaining their bachelor's degree; years since their first teaching appointment; gender (male, female, other, prefer not to say); highest education high school diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD; whether they studied abroad; teaching field (humanities, STEM, preschool or primary education, or other); and their egalitarian and elitist pedagogical philosophy. "Egalitarian" and "Elitist" pedagogical philosophies are measured via a 10-point allocation between two statements: "My role as an educator is to provide equal learning opportunities for all" and "My role as an educator is to prioritize those who can benefit the most." The Egalitarian (Elitist) score equals the points assigned to the first (second) statement; scores sum to 10.

Table A2: Balance Checks

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
	Present		Present		Present		
	High Achiever (A)		*Average Achiever* (B)		*Low Achiever* (C)		N
Age	-0.001	-0.001	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.000	1,166
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	
Experience	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	1,166
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	
Years since Graduation	-0.002	-0.002	0.002	0.003*	0.001	0.000	1,166
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	
Pedagogical Philosophy	-0.005	-0.006	0.002	0.002	0.004	0.005	1,166
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	
Female	0.005	0.000	0.014	-0.004	-0.005	0.009	1,166
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.031)	
Studied Abroad	-0.014	0.000	-0.007	-0.019	0.043	0.045	1,111
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.034)	
Studied Abroad Missing	0.003	-0.012	0.027	0.029	-0.026	-0.021	1,166
	(0.063)	(0.065)	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.064)	(0.067)	
Education: BSc	0.037	0.027	0.042	0.048*	-0.057**	-0.056*	1,166
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.029)	
Education: MSc	-0.028	-0.019	-0.031	-0.034	0.037	0.037	1,166
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	
Education: PhD	-0.004	0.001	-0.041	-0.050	0.047	0.039	1,166
	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.047)	(0.048)	
Field: STEM	-0.007	-0.004	0.043	0.037	-0.029	-0.033	1,166
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.035)	
Field: Humanities	0.018	0.024	-0.018	-0.021	0.023	0.021	1,166
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	
Field: Preschool or Primary	-0.015	-0.027	-0.016	-0.015	0.010	0.019	1,166
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.034)	
Field: Other	-0.025	-0.036	0.013	0.079	-0.084	-0.130	1,166
	(0.074)	(0.081)	(0.071)	(0.082)	(0.076)	(0.095)	
Prefecture Fixed Effects		✓		✓		✓	

Notes: The table shows randomization checks estimated using specification (2). In columns (1), (3), and (5), we do not account for prefecture fixed effects, while we include them in columns (2), (4), and (6). We regress the presence of a given type of student in the group (A, B, or C) on various teacher characteristics. These include age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for whether the teacher identifies as female (where the alternative categories are male/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), whether they have a bachelor's degree (no/yes), a master's degree (no/yes), or a PhD (no/yes), and whether they teach a subject in the field of humanities (no/yes), STEM (no/yes), preschool or primary education (no/yes), or other (no/yes). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A3: Baseline Results: Choice of the *Low Achiever* (C) if the *High Achiever* (A) is Present

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.039***	-0.039***	-0.039***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Baseline Mean	0.51	0.51	0.51
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50	0.50
Teachers	834	834	834
Observations	13,344	13,344	13,344
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE		✓	✓
Scenario FE			✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. We estimate results using specification (1). In column (1), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture and the gender of the student shown in the vignette. In column (2), we also control for objective fixed effects (using "Done successfully" as a baseline). In column (3), we also control for scenario fixed effects (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A4: Robustness Exercise: Choice of the *Low Achiever* (C) if the *High Achiever* (A) is Present

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.039***
	(0.015)
Baseline Mean	0.51
Baseline SD	0.20
Teachers	834
Observations	834
Controls	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. We estimate results using data with a structure of one observation per teacher. The specification accounts for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture and the gender of the student shown in the vignette. Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A5: Robustness Exercise: Controlling for the Saliency Effect

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.036**	-0.036**	-0.036**
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Baseline Mean	0.51	0.51	0.51
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50	0.50
Teachers	834	834	834
Observations	13,344	13,344	13,344
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓
Two *High Achievers*	✓	✓	✓
Two *Low Achievers*	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE		✓	✓
Scenario FE			✓

The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. We estimate results using a variation of specification (1). In column (1), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, and whether the vignette includes two students of type (A) and two students of type (B). In column (2), we also control for objective fixed effects (using "Done successfully" as a baseline). In column (3), we also control for scenario fixed effects (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A6: Robustness Exercise: Choice of the *Bottom Student* (B or C) if the *High Achiever* (A) is Present

	Choose the *Bottom Student* (B or C)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.033**	-0.033**	-0.033**
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Baseline Mean	0.54	0.54	0.54
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50	0.50
Teachers	1,166	1,166	1,166
Observations	18,656	18,656	18,656
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE		✓	✓
Scenario FE			✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *bottom student* (B or C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. We estimate results using a variation of specification (1), where the dependent variable equals one if the lowest-achieving student in the vignette is chosen. In column (1), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture and the gender of the student shown in the vignette. In column (2), we also control for objective fixed effects (using "Done successfully" as a baseline). In column (3), we also control for scenario fixed effects (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A7: Baseline Results: Choice of the *High Achiever* (A) if the *Low Achiever* (C) is Present

	Choose the *High Achiever* (A)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Present *Low Achiever* (C)	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Baseline Mean	0.40	0.40	0.40
Baseline SD	0.49	0.49	0.49
Teachers	824	824	824
Observations	13,184	13,184	13,184
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE		✓	✓
Scenario FE			✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *high achiever* (A) varies based on the presence of the *low achiever* (C) in the group. We estimate results using specification (1). In column (1), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture and the gender of the student shown in the vignette. In column (2), we also control for objective fixed effects (using "Done successfully" as a baseline). In column (3), we also control for scenario fixed effects (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A8: Mechanism Analysis: Estimated Effects by Scenario and Aggregated Objective

	Scenario				
Aggregated Objectives	Theater	Copies	Reading	Exercise	Across Scenarios
Beneficial for the Task	-0.025	-0.097***	-0.063**	-0.045*	-0.058***
	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.020)
N	1,668	1,668	1,668	1,668	6,672
Beneficial for Students	-0.004	-0.015	-0.018	-0.043*	-0.020
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.015)
N	1,668	1,668	1,668	1,668	6,672
Across Objectives	-0.015	-0.056***	-0.040**	-0.044**	-0.039***
	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.014)
N	3,336	3,336	3,336	3,336	13,344

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on the 8 combinations of scenarios and aggregated objectives, where "Beneficial to the Task" includes "Done Responsibly" and "Done Successfully," and "Beneficial for the Students" includes "Beneficial for the Other Students" and "Beneficial for the Student." We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A9: Mechanism Analysis: Estimated Effects by Scenario and Objective

	Scenario				
Objective	Theater	Copies	Reading	Exercise	Across Scenarios
Done Responsibly	-0.006	-0.086**	-0.074**	-0.042	-0.052**
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.022)
N	834	834	834	834	3,336
Benefit Others	-0.041	-0.026	-0.004	-0.041	-0.028
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.025)
N	834	834	834	834	3,336
Benefit Student	0.032	-0.004	-0.031	-0.045*	-0.012
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.015)
N	834	834	834	834	3,336
Done Successfully	-0.044	-0.108***	-0.052	-0.049	-0.063***
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.022)
N	834	834	834	834	3,336
Across Objectives	-0.015	-0.056***	-0.040**	-0.044**	-0.039***
	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.014)
N	3,336	3,336	3,336	3,336	13,344

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on the 16 combinations of scenarios and objectives. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A10: Mechanism Analysis: Estimated Effects by Scenario and Aggregated Objective for Boys

	Scenario				
Aggregated Objectives	Theater	Copies	Reading	Exercise	Across Scenarios
Beneficial for the Task	0.018	-0.153***	-0.063	-0.018	-0.054*
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.028)
N	826	826	826	826	3,304
Beneficial for Students	0.025	-0.039	-0.020	-0.030	-0.016
	(0.034)	(0.031)	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.023)
N	826	826	826	826	3,304
Across Questions	0.022	-0.096***	-0.042	-0.024	-0.035*
	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.028)	(0.021)
N	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	6,608

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on the 8 combinations of scenarios and aggregated objectives, including only boys in our sample, where "Beneficial to the Task" includes "Done Responsibly" and "Done Successfully," and "Beneficial for the Students" includes "Beneficial for the Other Students" and "Beneficial for the Student." We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A11: Mechanism Analysis: Estimated Effects by Scenario and Aggregated Objective for Girls

	Scenario				
Aggregated Objectives	Theater	Copies	Reading	Exercise	Across Scenarios
Beneficial for the Task	-0.063	-0.070	-0.061	-0.064*	-0.064**
	(0.038)	(0.043)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.027)
N	842	842	842	842	3,368
Beneficial for Students	-0.034	0.016	-0.016	-0.046	-0.020
	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.021)
N	842	842	842	842	3,368
Across Questions	-0.049**	-0.027	-0.039	-0.055**	-0.042**
	(0.024)	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.019)
N	1,684	1,684	1,684	1,684	6,736

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher is going to pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. The reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on the 8 combinations of scenarios and aggregated objectives, including only girls in our sample, where "Beneficial to the Task" includes "Done Responsibly" and "Done Successfully", and "Beneficial for the Students" includes "Beneficial for the Other Students" and "Beneficial for the Student". Panel A reports the estimates for boys, while Panel B reports the estimates for girls. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A12: Mechanism Analysis: Estimated Effects by Scenario and Objective for Boys

	Scenario				
Objective	Theater	Copies	Reading	Exercise	Across Scenarios
Done Responsibly	0.058	-0.127**	-0.091*	-0.005	-0.041
	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.031)
N	413	413	413	413	1,652
Benefit Others	-0.015	-0.056	-0.001	-0.030	-0.026
	(0.054)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.035)
N	413	413	413	413	1,652
Benefit Student	0.065*	-0.023	-0.039	-0.030	-0.007
	(0.037)	(0.028)	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.023)
N	413	413	413	413	1,652
Done Successfully	-0.021	-0.180***	-0.035	-0.032	-0.067**
	(0.049)	(0.052)	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.032)
N	413	413	413	413	1,652
Across Objectives	0.022	-0.096***	-0.042	-0.024	-0.035*
	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.028)	(0.021)
N	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	6,608

Notes: We estimate how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on the 16 combinations of scenarios and objectives, including only boys in our sample. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A13: Mechanism Analysis: Estimated Effects by Scenario and Objective for Girls

	Scenario				
Objective	Theater	Copies	Reading	Exercise	Across Scenarios
Done Responsibly	-0.058	-0.070	-0.049	-0.069	-0.062**
	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.031)
N	421	421	421	421	1,684
Benefit Others	-0.066	0.007	-0.003	-0.027	-0.022
	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.035)
N	421	421	421	421	1,684
Benefit Student	-0.002	0.024	-0.030	-0.066*	-0.018
	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.021)
N	421	421	421	421	1,684
Done Successfully	-0.068	-0.070	-0.072	-0.059	-0.067**
	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.030)
N	421	421	421	421	1,684
Across Objectives	-0.049**	-0.027	-0.039	-0.055**	-0.042**
	(0.024)	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.019)
N	1,684	1,684	1,684	1,684	6,736

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on the 16 combinations of scenarios and objectives, including only girls in our sample. We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A14: Heterogeneity by Student Gender

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)	
	(1)	(2)
	Student Gender	
	Boys	Girls
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.035*	-0.042**
	(0.021)	(0.019)
Baseline Mean	0.51	0.51
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50
Teachers	413	421
Observations	6,608	6,736
Controls	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓
Objective FE	✓	✓
Scenario FE	✓	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on different student gender (male/female). We obtain estimates using specification (1). In columns (1) and (2), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). In columns (3) and (4), we account for the fixed effects of the gender of the student shown in the vignette and remove the control for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy. Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A15: Heterogeneity by Teacher and Student Gender

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Male Teacher			Female Teacher		
	Overall	Boys	Girls	Overall	Boys	Girls
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.047	-0.029	-0.047	-0.046***	-0.055**	-0.039*
	(0.033)	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Baseline Mean	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.56	0.55	0.57
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Teachers	214	112	102	609	295	314
Observations	3,424	1,792	1,632	9,744	4,720	5,024
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scenario FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients are obtained by first splitting the sample by teacher gender in columns (1) and (4), and then by teacher–student gender combinations. We obtain estimates using specification (1). In columns (1) and (4), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for whether the teacher studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). In columns (2), (3), (5), and (6), we remove the control for the fixed effects of the gender of the student shown in the vignette. Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A16: Heterogeneity by Teacher Pedagogical Philosophy Index

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)	
	(1)	(2)
	By Pedagogical Philosophy Index	
	Below Median	Above Median
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.081***	-0.028
	(0.025)	(0.027)
Baseline Mean	0.47	0.54
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50
Teachers	275	214
Observations	4,400	3,424
Controls	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓
Objective FE	✓	✓
Scenario FE	✓	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on pedagogical philosophy index (egalitarian/elitist). Egalitarian teachers are those who allocate more than 5 points out of 10 to the statement "My role as an educator is to provide equal learning opportunities for all" rather than "My role as an educator is to prioritize those who can benefit the most." We obtain estimates using specification (1). In columns (1) and (2), we account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). In columns (3) and (4), we account for the fixed effects of the gender of the student shown in the vignette and remove the control for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy. Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A17: Heterogeneity by Teacher Characteristics: Education, Study Abroad, Field

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	BSc Education		Studied Abroad		Field		
	Lower	Higher	No	Yes	STEM	Humanities	Preschool or Primary
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.022	-0.048***	-0.042***	-0.018	-0.035	-0.029	-0.079***
	(0.025)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.020)	(0.030)
Baseline Mean	0.52	0.50	0.51	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.51
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Teachers	264	570	616	180	155	473	180
Observations	4,224	9,120	9,856	2,880	2,480	7,568	2,880
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scenario FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher is going to pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. The reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on different heterogeneity variables. These are teachers' education (below/above BSc), whether they studied abroad (binary), and field (humanities/STEM/other). We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A18: Heterogeneity by Teacher Characteristics: Age, Experience, and Years Since Graduation

	Choose the *Low Achiever* (C)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Median Age		Median Experience		Median YSG	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Present *High Achiever* (A)	-0.046**	-0.023	-0.043**	-0.030	-0.049**	-0.025
	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.022)
Baseline Mean	0.51	0.51	0.52	0.50	0.51	0.51
Baseline SD	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Teachers	426	408	429	405	435	399
Observations	6,816	6,528	6,864	6,480	6,960	6,384
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Objective FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scenario FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: We estimate how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from splitting the sample based on different heterogeneity variables. These are teachers' age (below/above median), years of experience (below/above median), and years since graduation (below/above median)(YSG). We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/ other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A19: Heterogeneous Effects: Alternative Approach #1

	$\hat{\beta}$
Panel A: Heterogeneity by Teacher Gender	
Female	-0.045***
	(0.016)
Male	-0.030
	(0.031)
Panel B: Heterogeneity by Education	
MSc or Above	-0.053***
	(0.017)
BSc or Below	-0.008
	(0.025)
Panel C: Heterogeneity by Study Abroad	
Did Study Abroad	-0.049
	(0.034)
Did not Study Abroad	-0.041**
	(0.016)
Panel D: Heterogeneity by Field	
Humanities	-0.033*
	(0.020)
STEM	-0.039
	(0.031)
Preschool or Primary	-0.047
	(0.029)
Observations	13,344
Controls	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓
Objective FE	✓
Scenario FE	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from the linear combination of the treatment effect and the interaction between the treatment effect and the heterogeneity variable. These are teachers' gender (male/female), teachers' education (below/above BSc), whether they studied abroad (binary), and field (humanities/STEM/other). We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A20: Heterogeneous Effects: Alternative Approach #2

	$\hat{\beta}$
Panel A: Heterogeneity by Egalitarian Attitude (excluding extreme values)	
Above Median Egalitarian Attitude	-0.012
	(0.027)
Below Median Egalitarian Attitude	-0.072***
	(0.024)
Panel B: Heterogeneity by Age (Above/Below Median)	
Above Median Age	-0.020
	(0.021)
Below Median Age	-0.056***
	(0.020)
Panel C: Heterogeneity by Experience (Above/Below Median)	
Above Median Experience	-0.024
	(0.021)
Below Median Experience	-0.051***
	(0.019)
Observations	13,344
Panel C: Heterogeneity by Years Since Graduation (Above/Below Median)	
Above Median YSG	-0.019
	(0.021)
Below Median YSG	-0.057***
	(0.019)
Observations	13,344
Controls	✓
Shown Gender FE	✓
Objective FE	✓
Scenario FE	✓

Notes: The table shows how the probability that a teacher will pick the *low achiever* (C) varies based on the presence of the *high achiever* (A) in the group. Reported coefficients result from the linear combination of the treatment effect and the interaction between the treatment effect and the heterogeneity variable. These are teachers' pedagogical attitudes (below/above median egalitarian), age (below/above median), years of experience (below/above median), and years since graduation (below/above median). We obtain estimates using specification (1). All specifications account for teacher age (years), time since graduation (years), experience (years), a value for egalitarian pedagogical philosophy (from 0 to 10), indicators for teacher gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say), whether they studied abroad (no/yes), whether the indicator for studying abroad is missing (no/yes), education (High School/BSc/MSc/PhD), field (humanities/STEM/preschool or primary education/other), and fixed effects for the prefecture, the gender of the student shown in the vignette, the objective (using "Done successfully" as a baseline), and the scenario (using "Solving an exercise" as a baseline). Standard errors are clustered at teacher level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

Table A21: Representativeness of Sampled High Schools

	Sample (125 Schools) Mean	Population (1,223 Schools) Mean	Difference (s.e.)
Student Characteristics			
Female (%)	0.56	0.56	-0.003
			(0.006)
Age (Yrs)	17.91	17.91	-0.001
			(0.004)
Born in 1st Quarter of Year (%)	0.13	0.13	0.000
			(0.003)
Graduation Cohort Size	58.80	74.43	15.632
			(3.219)
College Admission (%)	0.75	0.78	0.035
			(0.007)
Admitted to Higher Educational Institutions (%)	0.53	0.52	-0.010
			(0.008)
Apply to STEM Degree Programs (%)	0.62	0.62	0.004
			(0.005)
University Admission Score (/20,000)	13,358.38	13,705.55	347.177
			(71.339)
Track Choice (%):			
Classics Track	0.43	0.38	-0.044
			(0.006)
Competitive Science Track	0.12	0.14	0.020
			(0.005)
Professional IT Track	0.45	0.47	0.024
			(0.007)
School Characteristics			
Postcode Income (in 2009 Euros, Annual)	19,512.31	22,292.54	2,780.230
			(724.696)
Urban (1=yes)	0.76	0.89	0.130
			(0.031)

Notes: The table reports differences in student and school characteristics between the schools in the sample used in this analysis in column (1) and the universe of high schools in column (2), along with standard errors of the differences. Our data covers years between 2003 and 2011. *"Graduation Cohort Size"* refers to the final grade school cohort. The population includes all traditional and experimental public schools; evening, and private schools are excluded.

Table A22: Balance Tests Between Student Characteristics and the Presence of Exceptional Classmates

	Exceptional Student Present			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Student Gender (1=Female)	-0.003			
	(0.003)			
Age (in years)		-0.001		
		(0.003)		
Born in First Quarter (1=Yes)			-0.003	
			(0.005)	
Baseline Performance				0.003
				(0.002)
N	70,385	70,616	70,616	70,880
School Cohort FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Class Size Control	✓	✓	✓	✓

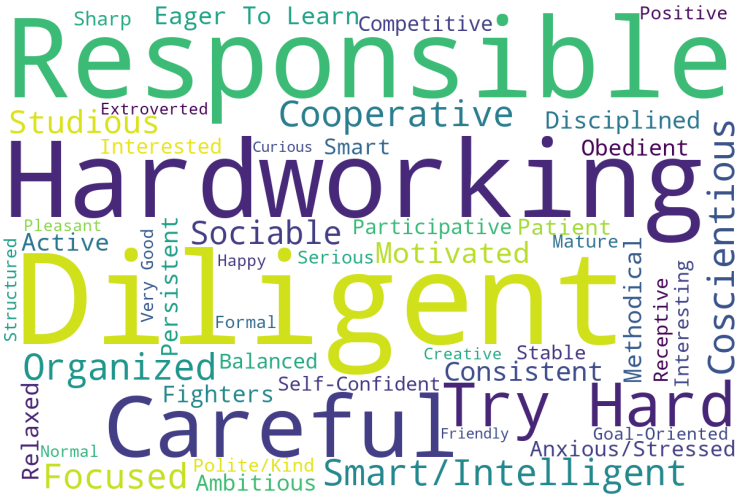
Notes: Exceptional students are defined as those in the top 5% of the full-sample performance distribution. Baseline performance corresponds to Fall grade-10 Mathematics scores. All specifications control for class size and school cohort fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the school cohort level. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level.

B Appendix B: Additional Qualitative Analyses

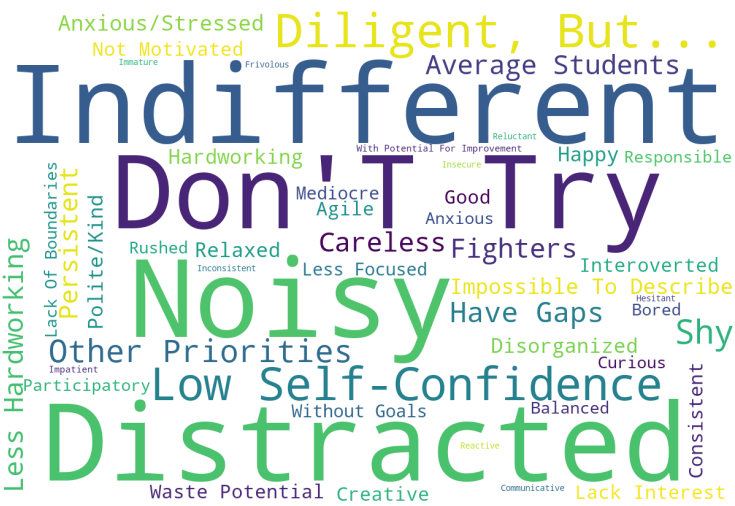
Figure B1: How Teachers Characterize Students of Different Types

Panel A: *High Achievers* (A)

Panel B: *Average Achievers* Students (B)

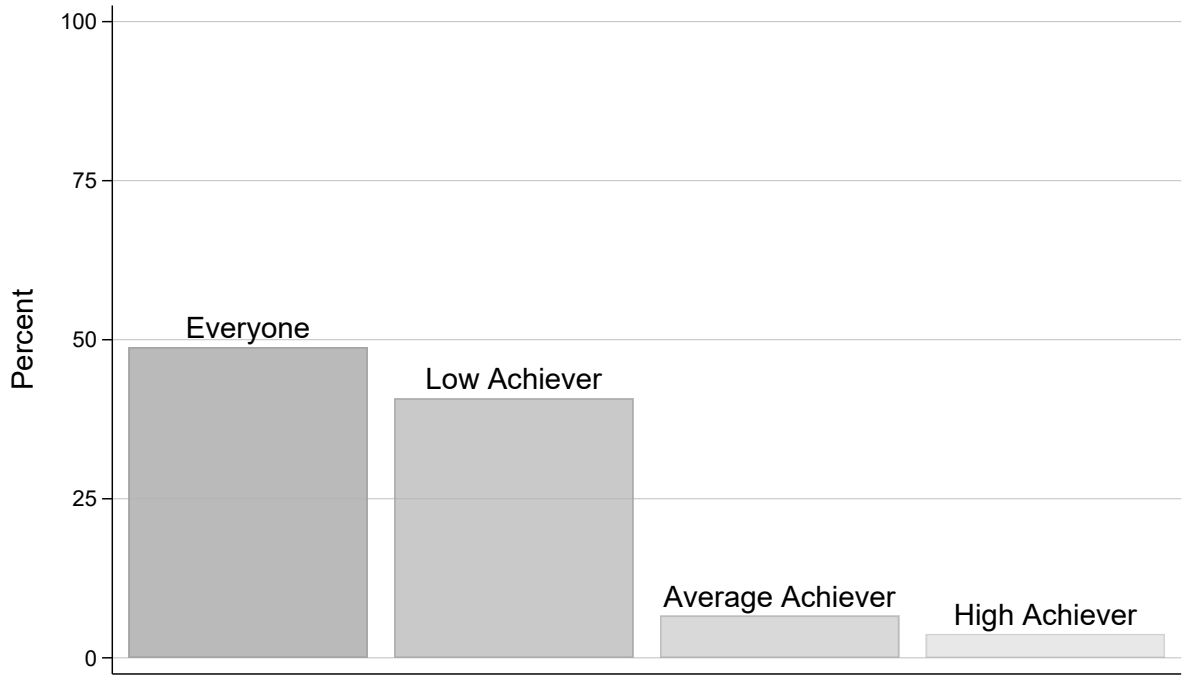


Panel C: *Low Achievers* Students (C)



Notes: The figure shows word clouds based on the adjectives teachers used to describe different student types. In three separate questions, we asked teachers to provide a few words to characterize students who are *high achievers*, *average achievers*, and *low achievers*. Answers were translated using Google Translate, and synonyms are grouped into one category. In each panel, we show the 50 most frequent answers for each student type.

Figure B2: Whom Do Teachers Say They Focus On?



Notes: The figure shows responses to the question: "In your teaching, do you tend to focus on the *high*, *average*, or *low* achievers? Why?" About 84% of participants answered this question (N = 770). Roughly 49% of teachers reported that they focus on everyone. The graph categorizes this as one of the alternatives to the other student types.

Table B1: How Do Teachers Justify Focusing on One of the Different Types of Students?

Description	Teachers	Percent
Panel A: *High Achiever* (A)		
Foster Further Development	10	1
Prevent Them from Losing Interest	5	0
Challenge Them Adequately	4	0
Other	10	1
Total	29	2
Panel B: *Average Achiever* (B)		
They Can Improve	28	4
They Need Help	6	1
They Are Willing to Work	4	1
Other	13	2
Total	51	8
Panel C: *Low Achiever* (C)		
They Need Help	84	11
To Encourage Effort	67	9
They Need to Catch Up (in Terms of Grades)	63	8
Other	100	13
Total	314	41
Panel D: *Everyone*		
For Fairness	138	18
Teaching Can Be Accessible to Everyone	81	11
Boost Self-confidence	11	1
Other	146	19
Total	376	49
Total Teachers	770	100

Notes: The table shows the most frequent reasons teachers give to justify investing more time in one of the three types of students. Panel A shows the most frequent reasons for the *high achiever* (A); the number of teachers stating they focus mainly on this type of student is 29. Panel B shows the most frequent reasons for the *average achiever* (B); the number of teachers stating they focus mainly on this type of student is 51. Panel C shows the most frequent descriptions for the *low achiever* (C); the number of teachers stating they focus mainly on this type of student is 314. The total number of answers to the question is 770.

Table B2: How Do Teachers Justify Focusing Mainly on *High Achievers* (A)?

Teachers Focus on the *High Achievers* (A) Because:		
Description	Teachers	Percent
Foster Further Development	10	34
Prevent Them from Losing Interest	5	17
Challenge Them Adequately	4	14
They Provide Fruitful Discussions	3	10
They Are More Participative	3	10
Exam Preparation	1	3
Time Constraints	1	3
They Deliver Results	1	3
They Need Recognition	1	3
Total	29	100

Notes: The table shows the reasons teachers give to justify focusing on students who are *high achievers* (A). The total number of answers is 770.

Table B3: How Do Teachers Justify Focusing Mainly on *Average Achievers* (B)?

Teachers Focus on the *Average Achiever* (B) Because:		
Description	Teachers	Percent
They Can Improve	28	55
They Need Help	6	12
They Are Willing to Work	4	8
They Provide Fruitful Discussions	3	6
Prevent Them from Losing Interest	3	6
Time Constraints	2	4
Maintain Their Level	1	2
See How They Handle New Activity	1	2
Exam Preparation	1	2
Boost Self-confidence	1	2
They Need Recognition	1	2
Total	51	100

Notes: The table shows the reasons teachers give to justify focusing on students who are *average achievers* (B). The total number of answers is 770.

Table B4: How Do Teachers Justify Focusing Mainly on *Low Achievers* (C)?

Teachers Focus on the *Low Achiever* (C) Because:		
Description	Teachers	Percent
They Need Help	84	27
To Encourage Effort	67	21
They Need to Catch Up (in Terms of Grades)	63	20
They Need to Improve	39	12
Boost Self-confidence	15	5
They Benefit More	15	5
Allows the Teacher to Verify Everyone's Understanding	13	4
Others Don't Need Help	7	2
Prevent Them from Feeling Excluded	5	2
They Don't Get Help at Home	3	1
Their Improvement Can Set an Example	1	0
For Equality	1	0
I Derive Satisfaction from Their Growth	1	0
Total	314	100

Notes: The table shows the reasons teachers give to justify focusing on students who are *low achievers* (C). The total number of answers is 770.

Table B5: How Do Teachers Justify Focusing on *All Types of Students*?

Teachers Focus on *Everyone* Because:		
Description	Teachers	Percent
No Justification Given	140	37
For Fairness	138	37
Teaching Can Be Accessible to Everyone	81	22
Boost Self-confidence	11	3
Create Group Cohesion	5	1
Sense of Duty	1	0
Total	376	100

Notes: The table shows the reasons teachers give to justify focusing on *all types of students*. The total number of answers is 770.

C Appendix C: Survey Structure and Questionnaire (English Translation)

C.1 Survey Translation

C.1.1 Block 1: Teacher Demographic Characteristics

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other
   - Prefer not to answer
2. In which year were you born?
   (Dropdown selection: e.g., 2000)
3. In what year did you complete your first cycle of studies?
   (Dropdown selection: e.g., 2000)
4. In what year did you begin teaching full-time?
   (Dropdown selection: e.g., 2000)
5. What is the highest academic degree you hold?
   - High school diploma or still studying in university
   - Bachelor's degree from a Higher Education Institution
   - Master's degree from a Higher Education Institution
   - Doctorate from a Higher Education Institution
6. Have you studied abroad?
   - Yes
   - No
7. What was your teaching specialty upon first appointment?
   (Dropdown selection: e.g., PE01)

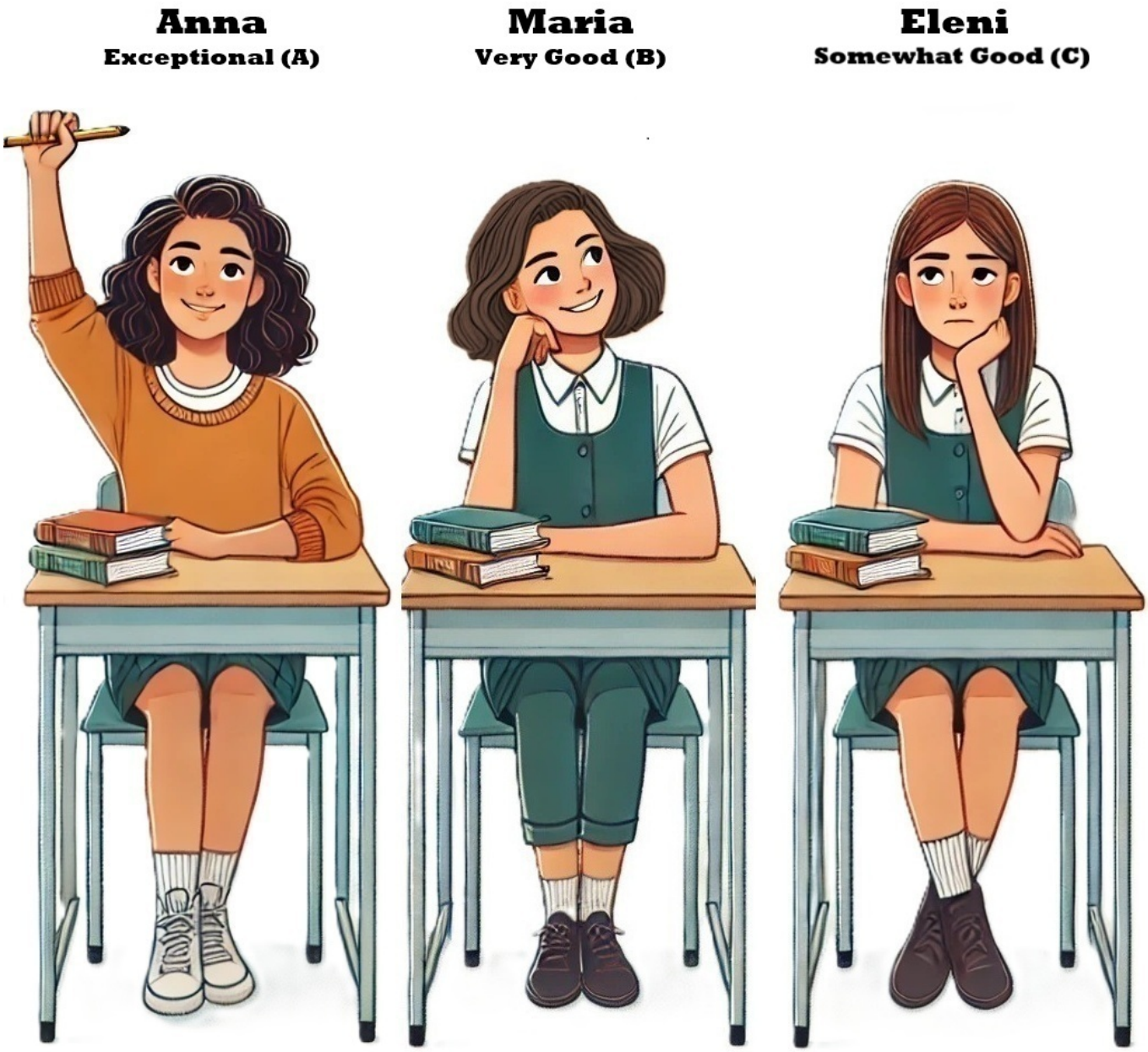
C.1.2 Block 2: Teacher Attitudes, Requirements, and Scenarios

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? *Please distribute 10 points across the following two statements, depending on how much you agree with each.*
   - My role as an educator is to provide equal learning opportunities for all.
   - My role as an educator is to prioritize those who can benefit the most.
9. Suppose you need to select a student for the **Afternoon Theater Club**. *Please distribute 10 points across the following four requirements, depending on how important you think they are.*
   - Perform the task responsibly
   - Benefit the other students
   - Be beneficial to the one executing it
   - Be performed successfully
10. Suppose you need to select a student to **Distribute Copies** to their classmates. *Please distribute 10 points across the following four requirements, depending on how important you think they are.*
    - Perform the task responsibly

- Benefit the other students
- Be beneficial to the one executing it
- Be performed successfully

11. Suppose you need to select a student to **Read Aloud** a paragraph from a textbook. *Please distribute 10 points across the following four requirements, depending on how important you think they are.*
    - Perform the task responsibly
    - Benefit the other students
    - Be beneficial to the one executing it
    - Be performed successfully
12. Suppose you need to select a student for the **Solve an Exercise** at the blackboard. *Please distribute 10 points across the following four requirements, depending on how important you think they are.*
    - Perform the task responsibly
    - Benefit the other students
    - Be beneficial to the one executing it
    - Be performed successfully

C.1.3 Block 3: Randomization of the Classroom Composition



The following questions concern the three students shown in the image. **Anna** is an **exceptional student** and has impeccable behavior. **Maria** is a **very good student**, rarely inattentive. **Eleni** is a **somewhat good student**, but she tends to get distracted during lessons. We will present you with a series of scenarios describing different activities and ask you to choose which student you consider most suitable for each situation.

A. Suppose you need to select a student for the **Afternoon Theater Club**.

13. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed responsibly**?

    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni

14. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the other students**?

- Anna
- Maria
- Eleni

15. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the student**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
16. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed successfully**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni

B. Suppose you need to select a student to **Distribute Copies** to her classmates.

17. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed responsibly**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
18. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the other students**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
19. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the student**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
20. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed successfully**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni

C. Suppose you need to select a student to **Read Aloud** a paragraph from a textbook.

21. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed responsibly**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
22. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the other students**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni

23. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the student**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
24. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed successfully**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni

D. Suppose you need to select a student to **Solve an Exercise** at the blackboard.

25. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed responsibly**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
26. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the other students**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
27. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **beneficial to the student**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni
28. Which one of the students would you pick so that the activity is **performed successfully**?
    - Anna
    - Maria
    - Eleni

C.1.4 Block 4: Open-ended Questions

29. When you teach, do you invest more time in **excellent**, *very good*, or *somewhat good* students? Why?
30. In two words, how would you describe the personality of students who tend to be **excellent**?
31. In two words, how would you describe the personality of students who tend to be **very good**?
32. In two words, how would you describe the personality of students who tend to be **somewhat good**?

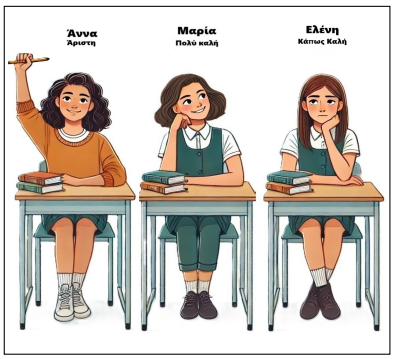
C.2 Survey Structure and Figures

We show the various options available to teachers participating in the survey through randomization. Teachers would be exposed to only one image of the 14 that we present between Figure C1 and Figure C2. The figures showcase the combinations between the 7 different types of groups and the gender of the students.

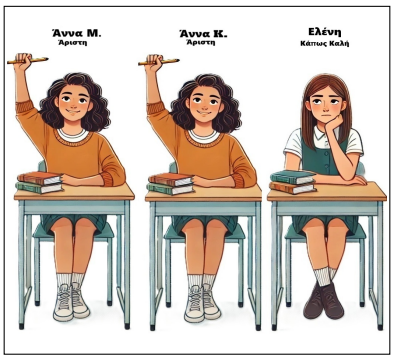
Figure C1: Survey Design Structure

Treated Groups: The *High Achiever* (A) Is in a Group with the *Low Achiever* (C)

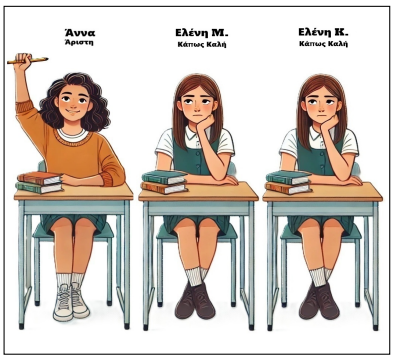
ABC



AAC

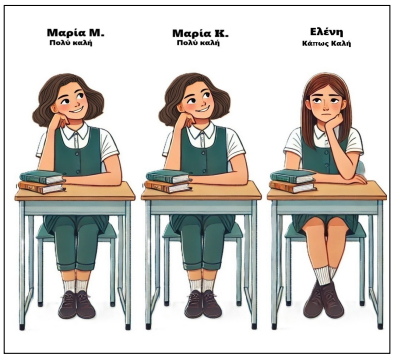


ACC

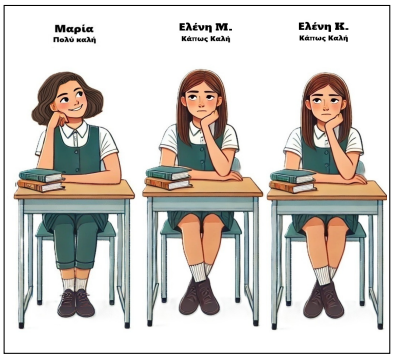


Control Groups: The *High Achiever* (A) Is not in a Group with the *Low Achiever* (C)

BBC

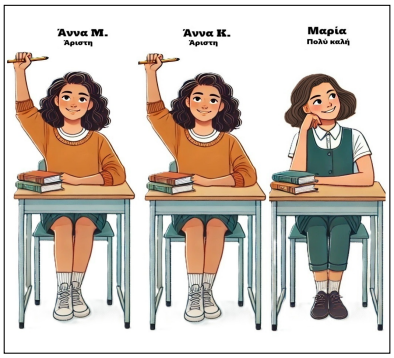


BCC

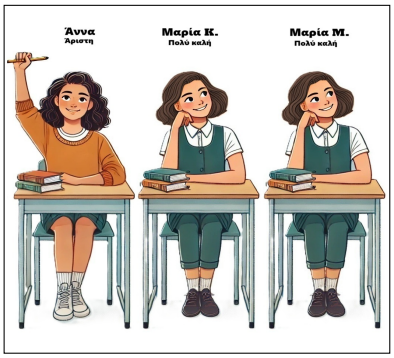


Excluded Groups: The *Low Achiever* (C) Is not Present

AAB



ABB

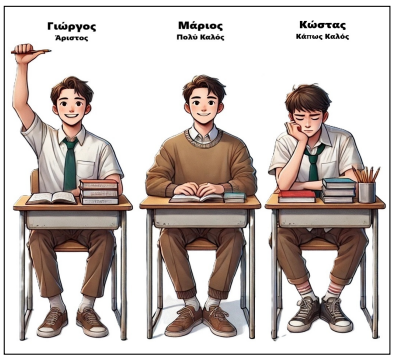


Notes: The figure shows all possible combinations of female student profiles (A), (B), and (C), as they are presented in the experimental vignettes. The upper panel shows treated groups, the middle panel control groups, and the lower panel groups that are not used in the main analysis.

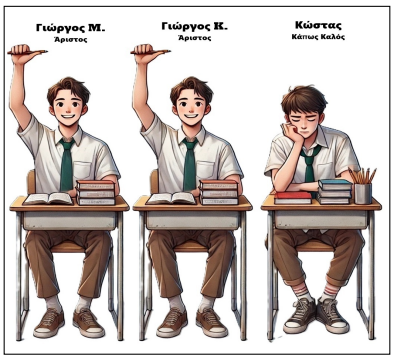
Figure C2: Survey Design Structure

Treated Groups: The *High Achiever* (A) Is in a Group with the *Low Achiever* (C)

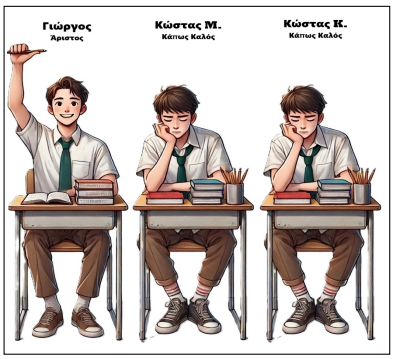
ABC



AAC

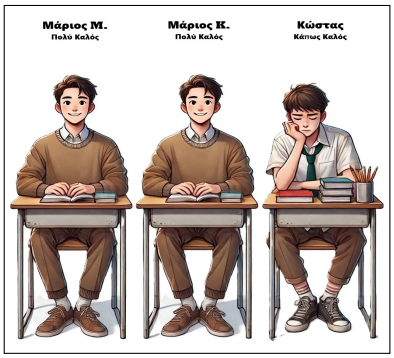


ACC

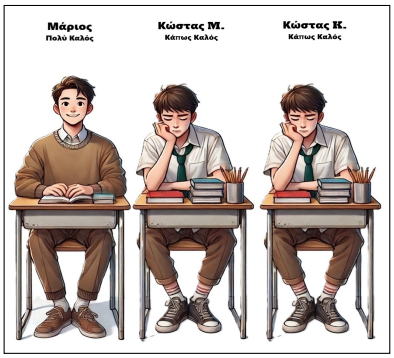


Control Groups: The *High Achiever* (A) Is not in a Group with the *Low Achiever* (C)

BBC

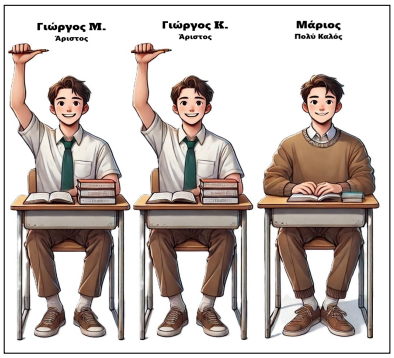


BCC

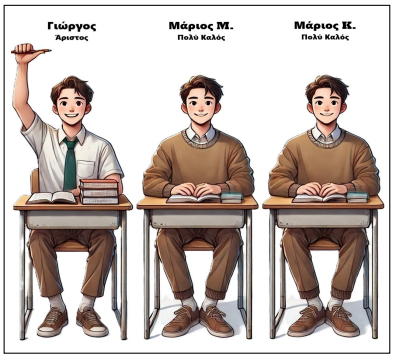


Excluded Groups: The *Low Achiever* (C) Is not Present

AAB



ABB



Notes: The figure shows all possible combinations of male student profiles (A), (B), and (C), as they are presented in the experimental vignettes. The upper panel shows treated groups, the middle panel control groups, and the lower panel groups that are not used in the main analysis.