

Personality outsmarts intelligence at school

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Larkmead School. Credit: CC-BY-SA-2.5,2.0,1.0

Recent research at Griffith University has found that personality is more important than intelligence when it comes to success in education.

Dr Arthur Poropat from Griffith's School of Applied Psychology has conducted the largest ever reviews of [personality](#) and [academic performance](#). He based these reviews on the fundamental personality factors (Conscientiousness, Openness, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, and Extraversion) and found Conscientiousness and Openness have the biggest influence on [academic success](#).

The results have been published in the journal [*Learning and Individual Differences*](#).

Dr Poropat says educational institutions need to focus less upon intelligence and instead, pay more attention to each student's personality.

"With respect to learning, personality is more useful than intelligence for guiding both students and teachers," Dr Poropat said.

"In practical terms, the amount of effort students are prepared to put in, and where that effort is focused, is at least as important as whether the students are smart.

"And a student with the most helpful personality will score a full grade higher than an average student in this regard."

In Dr Poropat's research, a student's assessment of their own personality is as useful for predicting university success as intelligence rankings.

However, when people who know the student well provide the personality rating, it is nearly four times more accurate for predicting grades.

Dr Poropat said understanding how personality impacts on academic achievement is a vital when it comes to helping students reach future success.

"Intelligence tests have always been closely linked with education and grades and therefore relied upon to predict who would do well," Dr Poropat said.

"The impact of personality on study is genuinely surprising for educational researchers, and for anyone who thinks they did well at school because they are 'smart'."

Previous studies have shown that students who think they are smart often

stop trying and their performance declines over time, while those who consider themselves hard workers get progressively better.

Dr Poropat said the best news for students is that it's possible to develop the most important personality traits linked with academic success.

"Personality does change, and some educators have trained aspects of [students'](#) Conscientiousness and Openness, leading to greater learning capacity.

"By contrast, there is little evidence that [intelligence](#) can be 'taught', despite the popularity of brain-training apps."

Provided by Griffith University

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