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Associations between teacher qualities and student outcomes in Finnish PIRLS 2016 data

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Family background correlates strongly with student achievement in reading literacy in PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) among fourth graders in Finland. However, research focusing on teacher qualities and teaching processes is inadequate. Our study used path analysis to explore whether or not teacher quality (formal qualification and teacher competence) and instructional quality (classroom management, cognitive activation, and teacher support) are associated with student outcomes (achievement, confidence, and engagement in reading) in the Finnish PIRLS 2016 data. Our data consisted of background variables from teacher (N=232) and student (N= 4,599) questionnaires and student achievement scores. Teachers and students in special education were excluded.

The majority of associations were found to be negligible. Teachers' support for students who were trying and showing progress in their learning was moderately correlated (.37) with students' reading engagement. The level of interference in the classroom correlated negatively with students' reading achievement and confidence in reading (-.14). The discussion will focus on the factors relating to reading literacy achievements and quality of questionnaires.