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Math Anxiety: From Teacher to Student.

Math anxiety is characterized by feelings of tension, apprehension, and fear about performing math. We show that when the math anxiety individuals are female elementary school teachers, their math anxiety carries negative consequences for the math achievement of their female students. Early elementary school teachers in the U.S. are almost exclusively female (>90%) and we demonstrate that these female teachers' anxieties relate to girls' math achievement via girls' beliefs about who is good at math. 1st and 2nd grade female teachers completed measures of math anxiety. The math achievement of their students was also assessed. There was no relation between a teacher's math anxiety and her students' math achievement at the beginning of the school year. By school year's end, however, the more anxious teachers were about math, the more likely girls but not boys' were to endorse the stereotype that "boys are good at math and girls are good at reading" and the lower these girls' math achievement. We also looked at the neural correlates of teachers and adults with math anxiety and show how some math anxious people overcome their fear of math. Implications for the mathematics training of teachers and students is discussed. (Received September 12, 2011)