Preliminary Findings of Kidsteps II: Promoting School Readiness through Social Emotional Skill Building in Preschool

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Purpose

- Test the feasibility of implementing the Second Step Early Learning (SSEL) curriculum in low-income community and Head Start preschool programs and examine the effect of the curriculum on the classroom quality
- Test the effect of SSEL on preschool teacher-rated behavior and social skills, and on child assessed social problem solving (SPS), and executive functioning (EF)
- Examine the relationships between improvements in SPS, EF, and end of preschool school readiness skills
- Test the effect of SSEL on kindergartners teacher-rated behavior, social skills, and academic competence

Hypotheses

- The SSEL classrooms will implement the curriculum with adequate fidelity and teacher satisfaction
- Compared to controls, SSEL classrooms will show greater improvements in classroom quality
- Compared to controls, children in SSEL classrooms will show significantly greater improvements in teacher-rated behavior and social skills, and individual child assessed SPS, and EF
- Improvements in SPS & EF will be related to end of year school readiness
- Compared to controls, children in SSEL classrooms will show significantly better kindergarten teacher-rated behavior, social skills, and academic competence

Method

- Study Design: Randomized control trial – 4 year study of 64 classrooms with 2 cohorts, each followed for 2 years
- Cohort 1 Participants:
  - N = 33 classrooms (16 intervention/17 Head Start 15 Community)
  - N = 777 children (395 intervention/382 control; 432 Head Start/345 Community)
  - 51% male; Mean age = 3.58; SD = 56, range 2.7 to 5.8
  - Race/Ethnicity: 20% African American; 39% Hispanic; 42% White
  - Parent education: 14.5% < H.S.; 34% H.S. Diploma/GED; 51% > H.S.
  - Family characteristics: 2% Married; Income: 63% < $20,000, 27% $20,000 - $39,999; 10% > $40,000
- Procedures:
  - Time collection: CLASS observations, teacher ratings and child assessments fall and spring each year. Kindergarten teacher ratings collected February-March
  - Intervention training: Monthly 2hr evening teacher meetings (7 in Yr. 1; 5 in Yr. 2)
  - Classroom quality: CLASS (only completed on half of classrooms)
  - Teacher-rated behavior and social skills: SSEL (preschoolers & kindergartners)
  - Social Problem Solving: Challenging Situations Task (only pre-k 4-year-olds)
  - Executive Functioning: Backward Digit Span, Less is More, Head Toes Knees Shoulders (assessed only in pre-k 4-year-olds)

Results


Conclusions

- The Second Step Early Learning (SSEL) curriculum was feasibly implemented across low-income community and Head Start preschool programs and success in being a promising curriculum for improving classroom quality, teacher-rated behavior and social skills, and directly assessed social problem solving skills and EF.
- The effects of SSEL on school readiness outcomes were mediated by improvements in EF (EF). (Test significant for all three outcomes. SPS was not related to end of year school readiness)
- Kindergarten (Year 2): No statistical differences in teacher ratings of intervention versus control children, but intervention children scored slightly higher in social skills and academic competence, but also slightly higher in problem behavior

Funding and Contact Information

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