

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

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Purpose

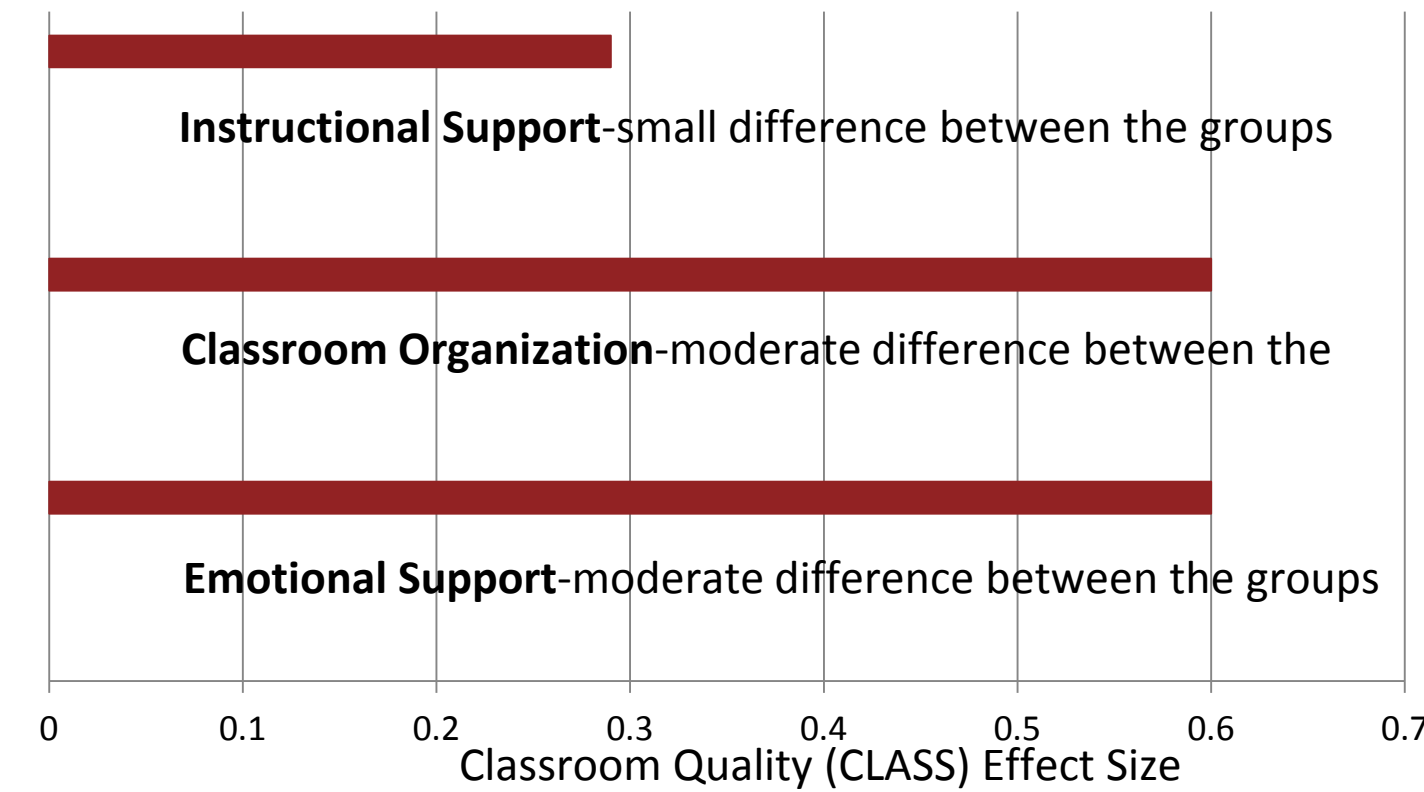
- Test the feasibility of implementing the Second Step Early Learning (SSEL) curriculum in low-income community and Head Start preschool programs and examine the effect of the curriculum on the classroom quality
- Test the effect of SSEL on preschool teacher-rated behavior and social skills, and on child 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 kindergarten teacher-rated behavior, social skills, and academic competence

Hypotheses

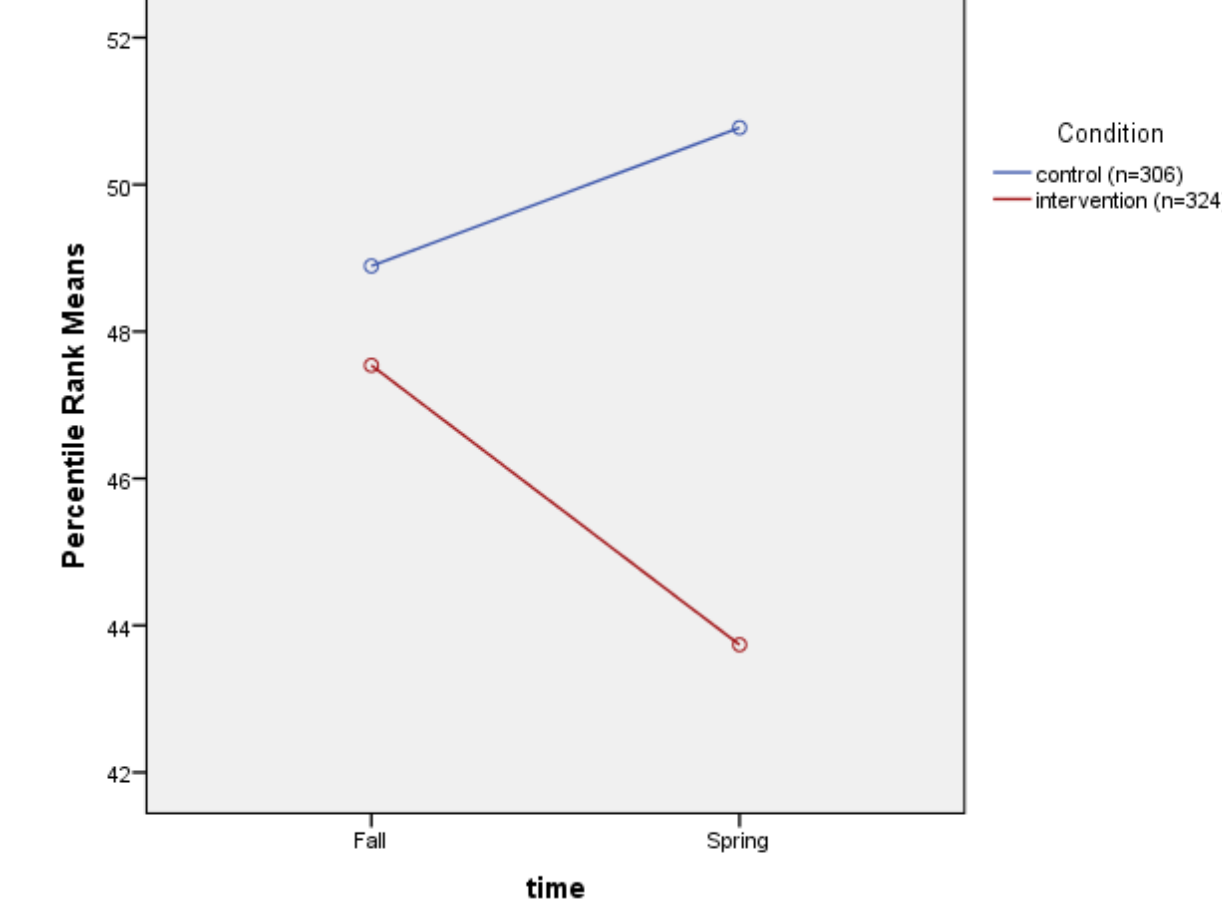
- The SSEL classrooms will implement the curriculum with adequate fidelity and teacher satisfaction
- Compared to controls, SSEL classrooms will show greater improvements in classroom quality
- Compared to controls, children in SSEL classrooms will show significantly greater improvements in teacher-rated 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

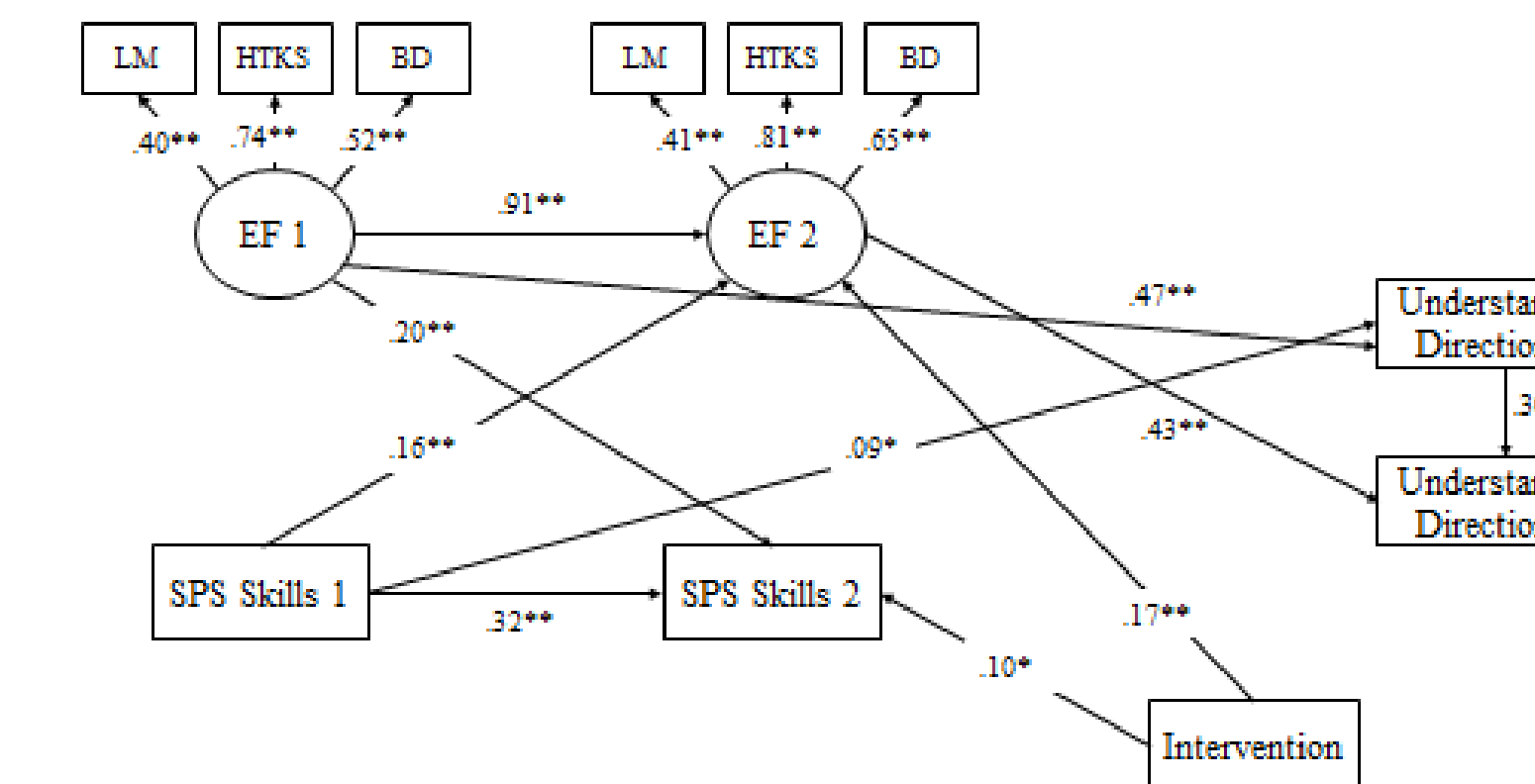
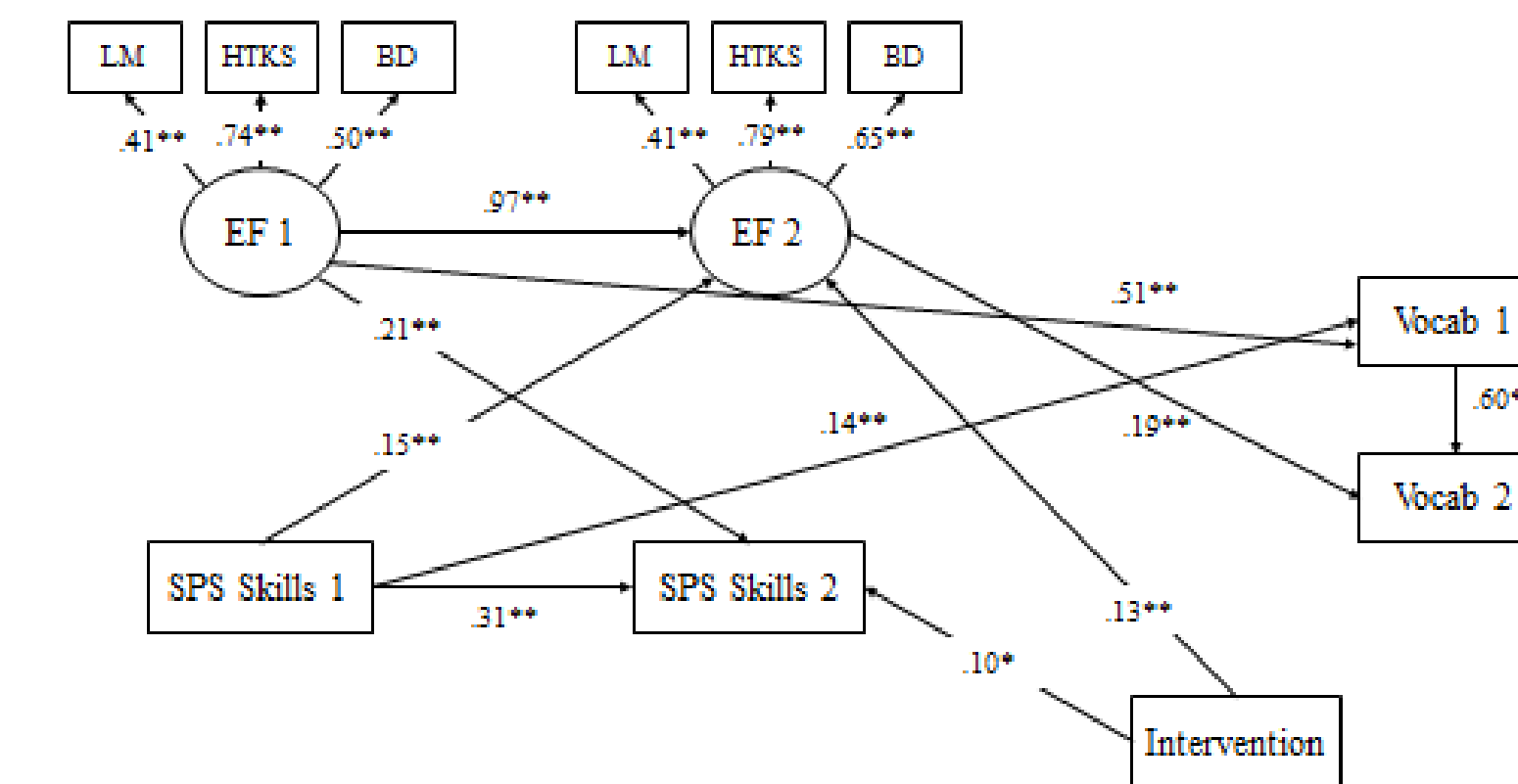
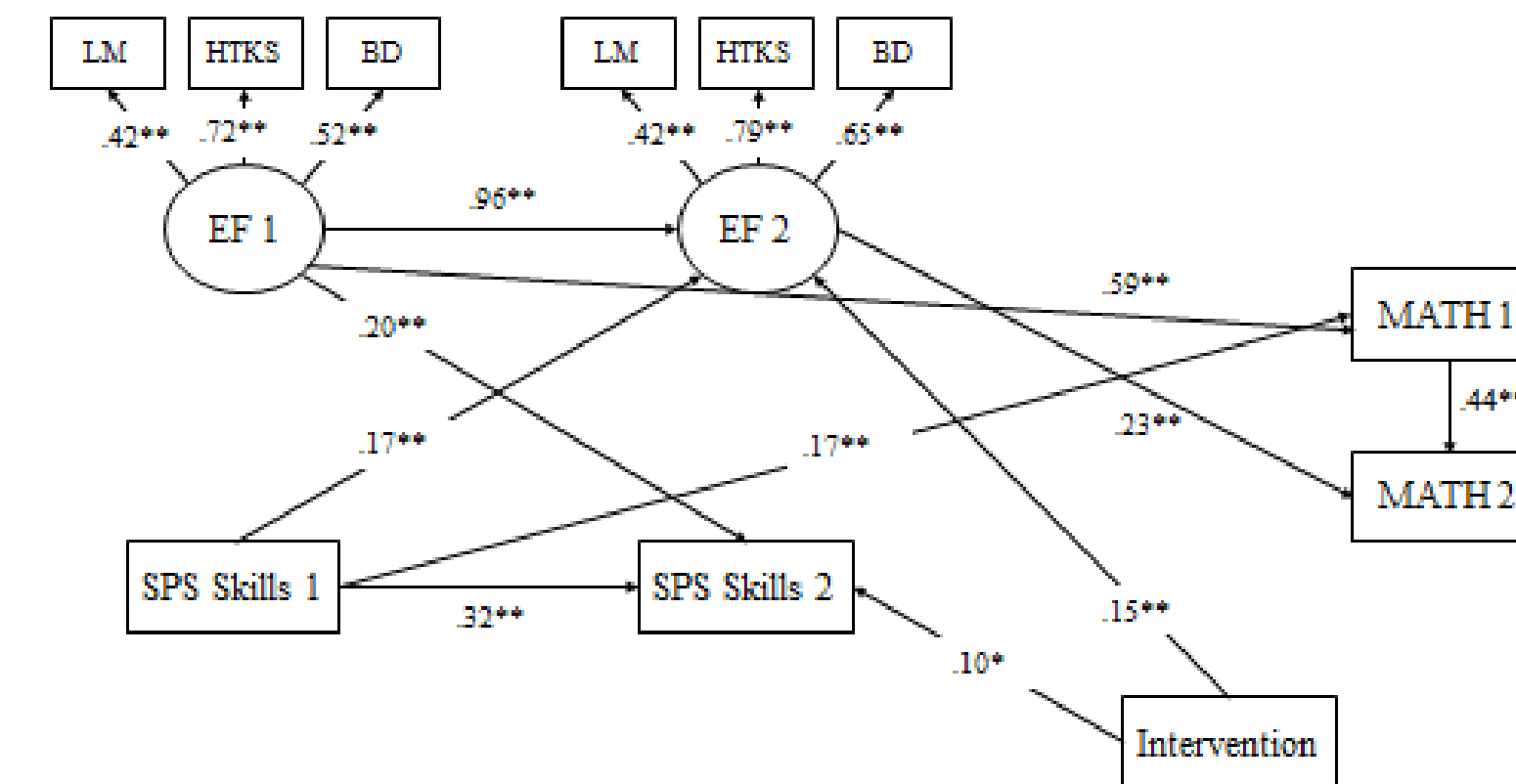
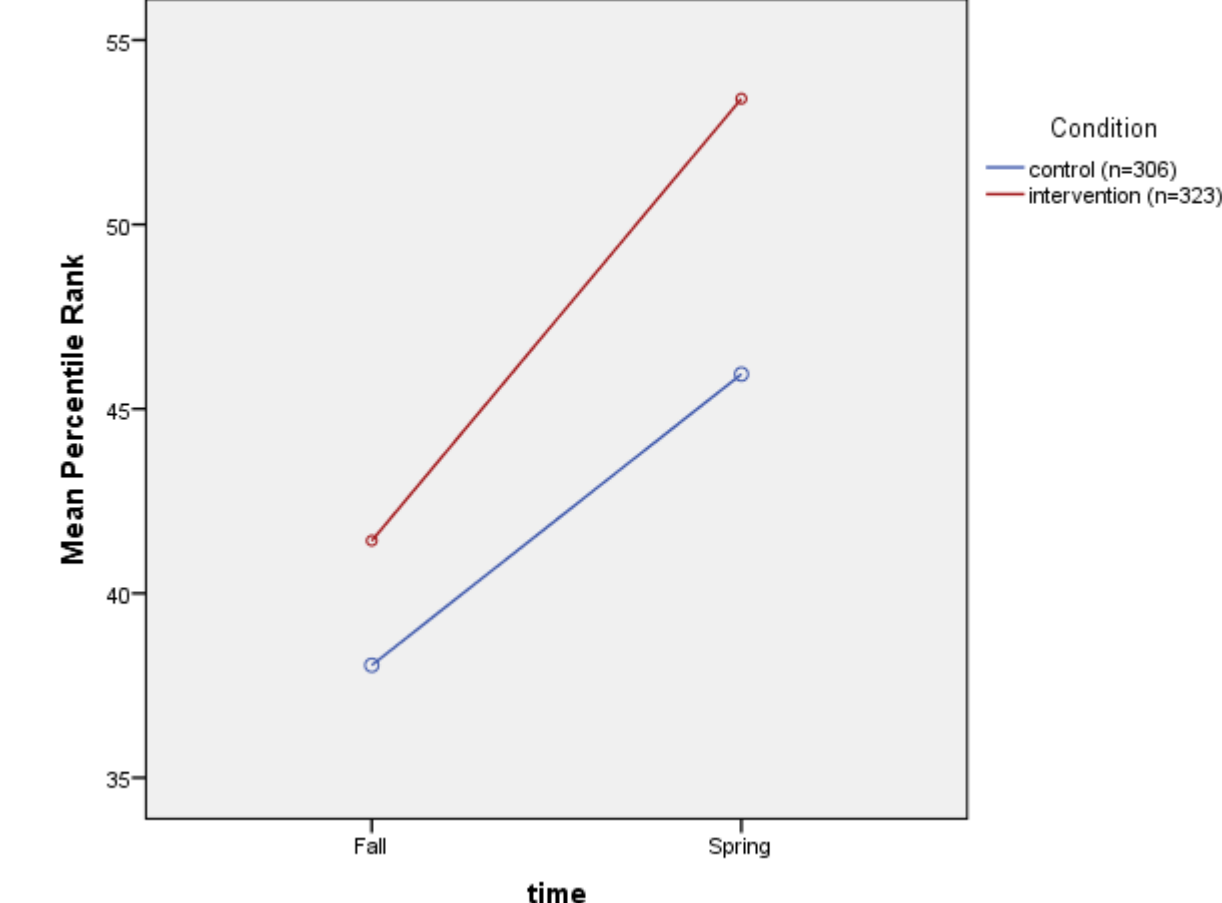
- **Study Design:** Randomized control trial—4 year study of 64 classrooms with 2 cohorts, each followed for 2 years
- **Cohort 1 Participants:**
 - N = 33 classrooms (16 intervention/17 control; 18 Head Start/15 Community)
 - N = 777 children (395 intervention/382 control; 432 Head Start/345 Community)
 - 51% male; Mean age = 3.9, 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: 25% Married; Income: 63% < \$20,000; 27% \$20,000 - \$39,999; 10% > \$40,000
- **Procedures:**
 - Data collection: CLASS observations, teacher ratings and child assessments fall and spring each year; Kindergarten teacher ratings collected February- March
 - Intervention training: Monthly 2 hr. evening teacher meetings (7 in Yr. 1; 5 in Yr. 2) and monthly classroom fidelity observation & coaching feedback
- **Measures:**
 - Classroom Quality: CLASS (only completed on half of classrooms)
 - Teacher-rated behavior and social skills: SSIS (preschoolers & kindergarten)
 - 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)
 - School Readiness: PPVT Vocabulary; Woodcock Johnson: Applied Problems (Math), Letter-Word, Understanding Directions (only pre-k 4-year-olds)



Preschool Teacher-Rated Problem Behavior (Group X Time Interaction; $p = .008$)



Preschool Teacher-Rated Social Skills (Group X Time Interaction, $p = .048$)



Funding and Contact Information

- Based on data from Kidsteps II: Promoting school readiness through social-emotional skill building in preschool. # R305A130336: US Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences.
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Results

- Fidelity: 14 out of 16 SSEL classrooms implemented the curriculum with fidelity
- Teacher satisfaction: 73.4% of intervention teachers felt well or very well trained in the curriculum & 77% said they would be continuing with the curriculum even after study ends; 83% said it improved classroom environment
- Best aspects of the curriculum: Puppets, story cards, and help for children's behavior. Challenging were the brain games, and integrating with other requirements
- Classroom Quality: Small to moderate effect sizes in all three CLASS domains favoring SSEL classrooms
- Teacher-rated Behavior & Social Skills: Compared to controls, SSEL children showed significantly greater improvements in social skills and problem behavior
- Child Assessed Social Problem Solving Skills and Executive Functioning: Compared to controls, SSEL children showed a trend for greater improvements in SPS ($F [1, 409] = 3.67, p = .06$) and significantly greater improvements in EF ($F [1, 412] = 10.62, p = .025$)
- SEM Analyses of School Readiness (Amos 22): Strong school readiness models were achieved for all but Letter-Word (CFIs = .96, .95, .95 and RMSEAs = .05, .05, .06 for Math, PPVT, & Understanding Directions, respectively). For each outcome, there was a transactional effect between EF and SPS skills over time. At the beginning of preschool, SPS skills and EF predicted baseline school readiness outcomes. Intervention predicted end of year SPS skills and EF. The effects of SSEL on end of year school readiness outcomes were mediated by EF (Sobel Test significant for all three outcomes). SPS was not related to end of year school readiness
- Kindergarten Outcomes: 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

Conclusions

- The Second Step Early Learning (SSEL) curriculum was feasibly implemented across low-income community and Head Start preschool programs and seems to be a promising curriculum for improving classroom quality, teacher-rated behavior and social skills, and directly assessed social problems solving skills and EF
- The effects of SSEL on school readiness outcomes were mediated by improvements in executive functioning, but not social problem solving
- SSEL was not related to teacher-rated behavior, social skills and academic competence in kindergarten

KIDSTEPS II

