Preschoolers’ Social-Emotional Competency and Time Spent Outside of School

Emma Merry, M.A.
Kisha Radliff, Ph.D.
Social-Emotional Competence
Components of Social-Emotional Competence:

• Self-awareness
• Social/other awareness
• Responsible decision making
• Self-management
• Relationship skills and management
• Positive outcomes across the lifespan
  • Academic Achievement
  • Social/Behavioral
  • Mental Health
Summer Learning Gap
• Academic skills regress over the summer months when children are not in school

• Students living in poverty, English language learners and students with disabilities are more likely to be affected

• Is this also the case for social-emotional skills?
The Current Study
• Purpose: Addresses a gap in the literature

• Investigate the ways in which social-emotional development in preschoolers is influenced by time spent outside of school
Research Questions
1. Is there a relationship between out-of-school time and preschoolers’ social-emotional competencies, as measured by teacher ratings?

1a. Do social-emotional skills decrease as a result of out-of-school time?

1b. Does the length of the school break impact this effect?

2. Do demographic variables predict this change in social-emotional competence?

3. How does the rate of growth in social-emotional competence during the school year differ from the social-emotional growth rates observed during out-of-school time (e.g., summer and winter breaks)?
Methods
Purpose

• Addresses a gap in the literature
• Investigate the ways in which social-emotional development in preschoolers is influenced by time spent outside of school
Overview

• Exploratory
• Longitudinal
• Pre-experimental
• One-group pretest-posttest design
• Treatment = out of school time (summer/winter breaks)
Procedures & Data Collection

O₁ = May 2013
O₂ = September 2013
O₃ = December 2013
O₄ = January 2014
O₅ = May 2014
O₆ = September 2014
Student Participants

- $n = 99$ Head Start student participants
- 50 male, 49 female
Teacher Participants

- n = 8
- 100% female
Instrumentation

• The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Preschool Program – Second Edition (DECA- P2) – web version (E-DECA 2.0)
• Summer Parent Survey
• Teacher Focus Groups
Variables

IVs: Gender, Age upon entering study, Disability status, Number of siblings, Setting where the child was cared for over the summer months

DV: student’s social-emotional skills as measured by DECA-P2
  • Total Protective Factors (TPF) $T$-score
  • Behavioral Concerns (BC) $T$-score
Analyses
• Pilot Test (repeated measures t-test)
  \( n = 22 \)
• Planned contrasts
  \( n = 17 \)
• Repeated Measures ANOVAs
  \( n = 40 \)
• Learning Rates Analysis
  \( n = 99 \)
Learning Rates
Analysis & Results
Means from complete data set; \( n = 99 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Point</th>
<th>Total Protective Factors (TPF)</th>
<th>Behavioral Concerns (BC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>Mean (sd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Summer 2013 (O₁)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49.95 (6.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Summer 2013 (O₂)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>47.75 (8.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Winter Break (O₃)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>48.35 (8.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Winter Break (O₄)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>48.26 (8.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Summer 2014 (O₅)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>52.37 (10.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Summer 2014 (O₆)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53.06 (7.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean TPF T-Scores and Mean BC T-Scores

- **Total Protective Factors**
- **Behavioral Concerns**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate over Summer 2013</th>
<th>Total Protective Factors (TPF)</th>
<th>Behavioral Concerns (BC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate over Summer 2014</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate for both summers</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate over winter break</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate over 2013-2014 school year</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean TPF and BC $T$-scores Pre- and Post-Summers, Winter, and School Year
Implications
• Importance of Head Start & preschool programming

• The longer students spend in Head Start, the more their social-emotional skills increase & behavior concerns decrease

• Supports exposure to preschool programming is important in building school-readiness skills

• Supports the existence of a summer learning gap for social-emotional skills
Limitations & Future Directions
• Sample size
• Lack of control group
• Recruitment and retention of participants
• Population studied
• Experiences during school breaks
Role of the School Psychologist
• Promote awareness of the social-emotional learning (SEL) gap
• Provide resources to families and educators to help support student’s SEL during school breaks
• During school months assist in creating positive school climate that promotes SEL
• Implement school-wide screening for social-emotional deficits
• Counseling and intervention groups targeted for SEL
Resources
Websites:
http://www.casel.org/
http://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning

Interventions & Programs:
Report from CASEL that reviews SEL programs for preschool and elementary school students:

http://static1.squarespace.com/static/513f79f9e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/526a220de4b00a92c90436ba/1382687245993/2013-casel-guide.pdf
Books for Educators:

Books for families/children/adolescents:
- [https://www.fbmarketplace.org/mitm](https://www.fbmarketplace.org/mitm)
  - Books divided by targeted skill and age level
- Todd Parr’s *The Feelings Book & Feelings Flashcards*
- Janan Cain’s *The Way that I Feel*
**Worksheets, Reproducibles & Activities:**


https://www.teachervision.com/emotional-development/teacher-resources/32913.html


http://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons?field_area_tid=1&field_topic_tid=All&field_grade_level_tid=All

http://www.edutopia.org/blog/sel-for-elementary-school-randy-taran


References


