

Research Snapshot

Children's Development of Self-Regulation for Learning During MindUP™



What you need to know:

This study explored how kindergarten children's self-regulation for learning (SR/L) developed within a mindfulness-based social and emotional learning program (MindUP™), along with children's demographic and teacher factors that were associated with it. Findings indicated that children's behaviours associated with solo and social SR/L increased over the implementation of MindUP™. In addition, student and teacher factors were associated with children's SR/L. Results highlight the need for further, large-scale research to better understand if implementing MindUP™ may support kindergarten children's SR/L in classrooms.

What is this research about?

Children engage in independent (solo) and collaborative (social) forms of self-regulation for learning (SR/L) when they are able to reflect on their learning strategies and behaviours, are willing to approach and persist during difficult tasks, and can behave strategically to achieve goals in the classroom. Young children's early and ongoing engagement in SR/L has been linked to positive outcomes in school.

Recently, schools have adopted a universal mindfulness-based social and emotional learning program, MindUP™, to support children in schools. Research investigating MindUP™ in older children indicates that the program has benefits associated with SR/L. For example, improved attention and positive school self-concept. However, none of the research has examined how the program may benefit young children's development of SR/L. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore children's development of SR/L during MindUP™ and how children's demographic and teacher factors were associated with it over the course of the school year.

What did the researchers do?

Data were collected using online student and teacher questionnaires, short-answer questions, and focus group questions. Participants in the study were 15 kindergarten teachers and 8 early childhood educators (ECEs) who provided ratings of 222 junior and senior kindergarten students (average age = 4.5 years old).

Educators responded to a set of questionnaires in Winter 2016/17 and Spring 2017 containing teacher-report measures of children's behaviours associated with solo and social SR/L.

In addition, educators reported on their own self-efficacy (e.g., "I have what it takes to help my students"), behaviour attributions (e.g., students' learning and behavior problems are rooted in their history of difficult life events"), and two dimensions of burnout, including personal accomplishment (e.g., "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in my job") and emotional exhaustion (e.g., "I feel used up at the end of the workday").

After completing the first set of surveys, educators attended a full day of MindUP™ training led by a Hawn Foundation facilitator. The training introduced teachers to the knowledge and activities within the program. After training, teachers and ECEs implemented the program in their kindergarten classrooms for approximately 15 weeks – including the daily mindful-breathing exercise, and once per week manual-led lessons.

After implementing MindUP™, educators completed the second round of student and teacher questionnaires, and had the opportunity to respond to two short-answer questions and participate in a focus group asking them to comment on any changes in their teaching and classroom and/or students over program implementation.

What did the researchers find?

Educators' ratings of kindergarten children's solo and social SR/L increased over program implementation. In addition, boys and junior children were given lower ratings of solo and social SR/L. Educators' attitudes towards children's problem behaviours before implementing the program, and their feelings of personal accomplishment after implementing the program were significant predictors of children's social SR/L.

“Brain breaks have also been a positive change. After we have had one, the children are often settled and calm and ready to learn.”

Finally, educators' comments indicated that they felt children were more calm and ready to learn, that they saw children use the programs skills to engage in solo and social SR/L, and that they observed several positive outcomes (e.g., more creative play and independent problem-solving) over the implementation of MindUP™.

How can you use this research?

This is the first study to provide preliminary evidence that children's solo and social SR/L develops along-side the MindUP™ program. Results highlight the need for quality teacher training and professional development directed towards the benefits of teaching towards SR/L

and supporting teachers' efficacy and stress reduction. In addition, they support the need for more research on these topics to allow researchers, educators and policy makers alike to better understand how young children's SR/L may be supported within the context of mindfulness-based Social-Emotional Learning programming.

Original Research Article:

For a complete description of the research and findings, please see the full research article:

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