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Precis:

Peer influence on academic performance: A social network analysis of social-emotional intervention effects

In the article *Peer influence on academic performance: A social network analysis of social-emotional intervention effects*, Dawn DeLay et al. (2016) mentioned the power that peers possess during youth, the negative impacts that power usually brings, and the lack of knowledge about intervention science pertaining to peer influence and positive outcomes. To gain more information, they conducted a longitudinal study to analyze whether peer relationships and socialization can facilitate positive academic outcomes in youth ages 9-12, particularly through the use of a social-emotional learning (SEL) intervention.

They implemented a relationship building intervention (RBI) in 15 different 5th grade classrooms and used 14 other classes as control rooms. The RBI consisted of 21 teacher-led activities covering topics such as inclusivity, empathy, and communication. The children were assessed before and after the implementation of the RBI, with the pre-test being in the fall and the post-test being in the spring. During both tests, students were asked to identify up to eight close friends and teachers rated students' math and writing performances using a scale of development.

The results of this study found that students in RBI classes nominated slightly more friends on average than those in control rooms. Within those friendships, students in the control classes were more likely to select friends based on ethnicity and level of math performance than

those in RBI classrooms. The study also found that only students in the RBI classes moved toward the average level of their peers' academic performance in math and writing from pre to post test.

The authors mentioned of limitations that could affect the applicability of this intervention to real life settings, such as inability to generalize the impacts of SEL among various grades and lack of causality. Limitations not listed by the authors that need to be considered are how different subjects might change these outcomes, as well as whether or not the interactions between peers outside of both classroom conditions differed. The authors concluded that SEL interventions may promote positive peer influence that improves academic performance, and that studies such as this one may help expand prevention science regarding social relationships in the future.

Direct Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11121-016-0678-8>

References

- DeLay, D., Zhang, L., Hanish, L. D., Miller, C. F., Fabes, R. A., Martin, C. L., ... Updegraff, K. A. (2016). Peer influence on academic performance: A social network analysis of social-emotional intervention effects. *Prevention Science, 17*(8), 903-913. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11121-016-0678-8>