

The Kindness Project: Impact of Mindfulness Training on Preschoolers' Executive Function, Cognitive Development, and Academic Performance

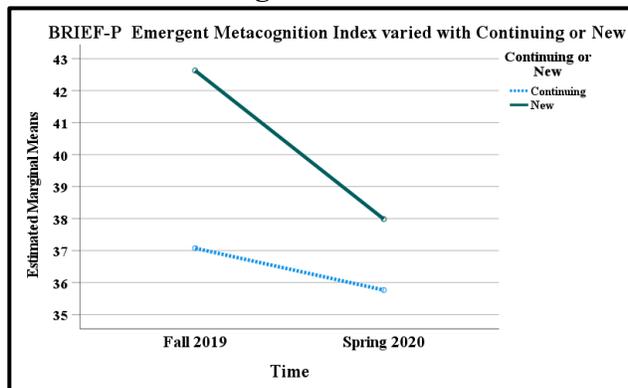
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The Kindness Project brings mindfulness training to early childhood agencies serving primarily lower income preschool and 4K children. In the 1st year a randomized-control study demonstrated positive impact of the mindfulness-based Kindness Curriculum (KC) on children's social-emotional and cognitive skills. This paper presents cognitive gains in the 2nd year of the Project. Preschool children, ages 3-5 (n=261, 70% low income; 43% White) in 16 classrooms received the 12-week KC. Teachers assessed children's executive function (BRIEF-P), school readiness (TS-Gold), and academic achievement (report cards) both pre- and post-KC.

Despite pandemic challenges, including some temporary classroom closures and hybrid instruction, both children continuing with and those new to the KC improved over time on cognitive and academic skills. Continuing children had significantly higher report card scores on math and language arts than those new to the KC. They also had better scores on cognitive, literacy, and math skills on the school readiness measure. The KC also had positive effects on children's executive function skills including working memory, shifting attention, planning/organizing & mental flexibility.

Overall, the KC positively impacted preschool children's executive function, cognitive & academic skills even during a pandemic. Higher scores in several areas for continuing children demonstrated better outcomes with additional experience in mindfulness skills and highlighted benefits of the KC.

Illustrative Findings



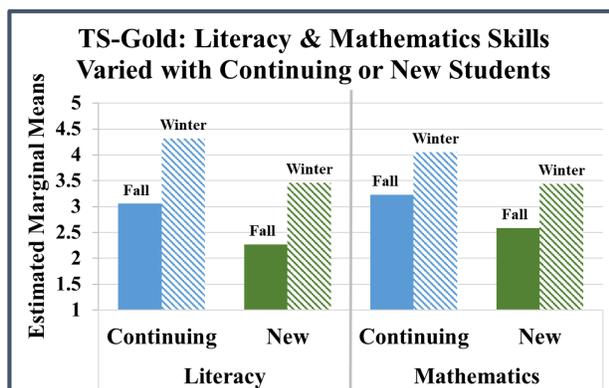
*** Lower Scores are better**

Metacognitive Skills

$F(1, 214) = 4.12, p = .044, ES = .019$

ME Time: $F(1,214) = 13.12, p = .001, ES = .058$

ME Cont. or New: $F(1,214) = 4.98, p = .027, ES = .023$



Literacy Skills

ME Cont. or New: $F(1, 178) = 20.26, p = < .001, *ES = .102$

Mathematics Skills

ME Cont. or New: $F(1,178) = 15.03, p = < .001, *ES = .078$

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