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Long-Term Consequences of Child Care

From the Director's Office: Long-Term Consequences of
Child Care

Abecedarian Project

Mussorgsky

Depression

Relationships, Child & Teacher

NCEDL News: Georgia Conference

NCEDL News: Nearly 1,000,000 Served

Child-teacher relationship in child care predicts later social relations



Relationships *child & teacher*

Following are excerpts from "Social-emotional classroom climate in child care, child-teacher relationships and children's second-grade peer relations" by Carollee Howes, UCLA. Data for this paper, which is in press at Social Development, was gathered in the Cost Quality and Outcomes Study, a five-year on-going longitudinal study examining the effects of child care in four states.

The quality of children's early relationships with their teachers in child care is emerging as an important predictor of children's social relations with peers as older children. Our data explored the relative contributions of early classroom social/emotional climate and individual relationships and behaviors to social competence with peers five years later.

Results

- Children who rated high in peer aggression, disruption, and social withdrawal were rated high in child-teacher relationship conflict and low in child-teacher relationship closeness.
- Children who rated high in prosocial behavior with peers also were rated high in child-teacher relationship closeness and low in child-teacher relationship conflict.
- Classrooms with higher levels of behavior problems had lower levels of child-teacher closeness.

Predictive factors

Children's second-grade social competence with peers ratings could be predicted by

- preschool classroom social-emotional climate,
- four-year-old behavior problems and child-teacher relationship quality and
- contemporary child-teacher relationship quality.

Aggression ratings were best predicted by

- a preschool classroom high in behavior problems and low in child-teacher closeness,
- the child's poor child-teacher closeness as a four-year-old and
- contemporary child-teacher relationship conflict.

Disruption ratings could best be predicted by

- being a boy,
- preschool classroom climates high in behavior problems and low in child-teacher closeness as a four-year-old and
- high levels of child-teacher conflict as a second grader.

Prosocial ratings could best be predicted by

- being a girl,
- preschool classroom climates high in time spent interacting with peers,
- the child's low levels of behavior problems as a four-year-old and
- high levels of child-teacher closeness and low levels of child-teacher conflict as a second grader.

Ratings of social withdrawal could best be predicted by

- a classroom climate high on behavior problems,
- low levels of individual behavior problems as a four-year-old and
- low levels of child-teacher closeness as a second grader.

Discussion

Considerable individual variation in children's social competence with peers as second graders can be understood by examining both their individual experiences as four-year-olds in child care and the social emotional climate of their child care classroom.

These findings support the premise that individual relationships are constructed within particular contexts. The contributions of the individual children, their teachers and the climate of the context are all important predictors. Both child care teachers and elementary teachers may benefit from an increased awareness of the importance of the social and emotional climate of the classroom.

This suggests that teacher preparation programs may need to focus on this aspect of curriculum for young children as well as more traditional material.

Underpinning our thinking


Howe's perspective on teacher-child relationships is drawn from attachment theory, which assumes that children use their relationships with significant adults to organize their experiences.

Current research suggests that children with close child-teacher relationships are also socially competent with peers. Children perceived by teachers as difficult four-year-olds tend to build child-teacher relationships high in conflict.



These persist so that by kindergarten, children who were problematic four-year-olds tend to be less able than children with other relationship histories to use the child-teacher relationships to master the academic content of school.

Our outcome measure, second-grade social competence with peers, is significant because by mid-elementary school, individual differences in children's social competence with peers appears to stabilize and predict future adaptive or non-adaptive behavior in adolescence.

Aggression and social withdrawal are maladaptive behaviors, indicating the absence of social competence. 

If children feel emotionally secure with the teacher they can use her as a secure base and a resource for exploring the learning opportunities of the classroom.



Each child-teacher relationship is built independently of the child's prior adult-child relationships (including child-mother) and of the other child-teacher relationships in the classroom.