Cooperation and Achievement in Preschoolers
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Abstract
- Children’s ability to cooperate is an important part of the learning-related skills that contribute to classroom success.
- This study examined relations between observed peer cooperation and scores on achievement tasks.
- Using a diverse sample of 258 preschool children, results indicated that instances of observed cooperation with peers did not predict results on Woodcock Johnson III Achievement tasks.
- These results indicate that peer cooperation as observed on the Observed Child Engagement Scale is not an indicator of academic achievement, and that further research is needed to determine if more thorough measures could be used as a predictor.

Introduction
- Children’s learning related skills, such as cooperation, self-regulation, responsibility, and independence, are significantly related to their academic outcomes (McClelland, Acoc, & Morrison, 2006).
- Specifically, cooperation with peers is an easily observable behavior, and may be a predictor of children’s achievement (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999).
- Peer cooperation is measured on the Observed Child Engagement Scale (OCES), an assessment that gives scores on several dimensions based on an 8-minute observation period.
- In Dr. McClelland’s Touch Your Toes! Kindergarten Readiness Study, scores on the OCES are closely related to scores on the Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders measure, which measures self-regulation, and predicts achievement outcomes (Ponitz, McClelland, Matthews, and Morrison, 2006).
- Based on this and previous research, it is possible that instances of peer cooperation might predict future achievement outcomes.

Goals of the Study
- The present study examined the following research questions:
  1. What is the relationship between children’s observed cooperation with peers on the OCES and their scores on the Woodcock-Johnson III achievement tasks?

Table 1. Peer Cooperation measured on the OCES predicting scores on WJ III Achievement Tasks (N = 258)

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<td>B SE B</td>
<td>.02 2.46 .001 .43 1.90 .02 .38 1.08 .03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>2.78 .69</td>
<td>41* 1.87 .53 35* .137 .30 .43</td>
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<td>Child Age</td>
<td>.89 .74</td>
<td>12 1.72 .58 29* .79 .33 .23</td>
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<td>p &lt; .05</td>
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Results
- I predicted that higher scores for peer cooperation on the OCES would significantly predict higher scores on the WJ III achievement tasks for preschool children.

Summary/Conclusion
- Results indicated that instances of observed peer cooperation on the OCES did not significantly predict children’s scores on WJ III Achievement Tasks in preschool.
- Since research has shown that cooperation is a predictor of achievement (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999), these results point to the need for further research on the relationship of learning related skills and academic achievement.
- Research may examine how social skills may directly or indirectly affect academic outcomes, through other variables like self-regulation.

References

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