Predicting Pre-Kindergarteners’ Executive Function Skills: The Role of the Classroom

Caitlin Daly
University of New Hampshire, Durham, ceo758@wildcats.unh.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/honors

Part of the Educational Methods Commons, and the Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Daly, Caitlin, "Predicting Pre-Kindergarteners' Executive Function Skills: The Role of the Classroom" (2016). Honors Theses and Capstones. 277.
https://scholars.unh.edu/honors/277

This Senior Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses and Capstones by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.
Predicting Pre-Kindergarteners’ Executive Function Skills: The Role of the Classroom

Caitlin Daly

University of New Hampshire
Abstract

This study examined how classroom organization and structure influenced 1,065 pre-kindergartener’s acquisition and cultivation of executive function skills across 80 pre-kindergarten classrooms. Measures of the pre-kindergartener’s gains in cognitive flexibility, sustained attention, working memory, inhibitory control, and work-related skills were related to the amount of classroom time spent in instruction, the proportion of instructional time spent in whole-group, small-group, and centers, the number of times out of the classroom, and the number of classroom transitions. Results suggested that specific aspects of pre-kindergarten classroom organization and structure have an effect on children’s executive function gains, especially with regard to children’s sustained attention, working memory, inhibitory control, and work-related skills. Findings implicate the importance of identifying ways to improve children’s executive function skills so that they can succeed in school. Simple changes to a classroom’s organization and structure have an impact; therefore, it is important not only to focus on supplemental curriculum to improve children’s executive function skills, but to focus on how learning is structured.