



Results for the Captain McFinn Explore Kindness – Social Skills Curriculum

What is Captain McFinn?

Captain McFinn's Explore Kindness is a social skills comprehensive program developed to give K - 2 teachers everything they need to create safe, caring classrooms. Created by accredited educators, Captain McFinn is designed to promote children's positive emotional competencies by fostering kindness, empathy and other key prosocial skills. Using the Captain McFinn and Friends characters, the program actively engages students with fun, hands-on activities that discourage problematic social behaviors, while strengthening positive relational competencies.

Why is it important?

Developing children's emotional knowledge is the foundation to promoting and maintaining positive relational skills throughout childhood. In fact, research shows that *empathy* is a key aspect of children's social-emotional competence (e.g., Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). For example, we know that children with lower levels of empathy are more likely to struggle with social skills such as excluding others from play as well as other aggressive behaviors. We also know that students who are better able to *identify* others' feelings are more likely to experience positive relationships with their peers (Crick & Dodge, 1994) and are less likely to struggle with regulating their own emotions (Vine & Aldao, 2014).

Does the curriculum work?

Data was collected from both teachers *and* the children themselves to answer this question. To measure students' socio-emotional competencies, kindergarten and first grade children and their respective teachers completed assessments at the beginning and end of the eight-week curriculum. Their responses were then compared to students the same age, who did *not* receive the curriculum. Results from several participating schools revealed that students enrolled in the Captain McFinn curriculum expressed greater empathy and emotion recognition (i.e., were better able to accurately label others' facial expressions) compared to their peers who did not receive the program.



What Do the Kids Say?

After participating in the program, students were asked individually - *"What has Captain McFinn taught you?"*



"...[to] be kind to friends, like treat others the way you want to be treated."

"...it's fun to play with them!"

"To be nice...and not to be mean."

"Not to bully, and not to make fun of [people] and not to be mean."

"Taught us to be good... um to be happy and, and, and if somebody needs help they have to help, and I would help them always... because I like helping my friends."



Summary of Results

Emotion Regulation – Example Item: “This child stops and calms down when excited or upset compared to peers at this grade level.”

Results indicated that children participating in the Captain McFinn curriculum reported significant *improvements* in their ability to regulate their emotions, while no changes were found in the control group. That is, children who did NOT participate in the Captain McFinn program did not show any significant changes in their emotion regulation over time. These positive changes occurred for both boys and girls.



Social Competencies – Example Item: “This child obeys classroom rules and teachers’ directions.”

Results showed that children participating in the Captain McFinn curriculum reported significant *improvements* in social competencies, while no changes were found for those who did not participate in Captain McFinn. These positive changes in children’s social competencies occurred for both boys and girls.

Relational Aggression – Example Item: “This child tells a peer they won’t be invited to their birthday party unless he/she does what the child wants.”

Results indicated that children participating in the Captain McFinn curriculum showed no changes in relationally aggressive behavior over time. On the other hand, those children who were not exposed to Captain McFinn curriculum showed significant increases in relationally aggressive behavior over time.



Physical Aggression – Example Item: “This child pushes or shoves other children.”

Results indicated that children participating in the Captain McFinn curriculum showed significant *decreases* in their use of physical aggression. On the other hand, those children who did *not* participate in Captain McFinn showed significant *increases* in their use of physical aggression towards their peers. These findings were the same for boys and girls.

Emotion Recognition – Example Item: “This child recognizes and labels his/her feelings and those of others appropriately.”

Results revealed that children participating in the Captain McFinn curriculum were more likely to appropriately recognize emotions in themselves and others over time. Children who did *not* receive the Captain McFinn curriculum did not do as well when asked to recognize these emotions. These findings were the same for boys and girls.

Empathy – Example Item: “This child gets sad to see a child with no one to play with.”

Results showed that children participating in the Captain McFinn curriculum were *more* likely to express empathy over time, while children who did *not* receive the Captain McFinn curriculum were *less* likely to express empathy over time. These findings were the same for boys and girls.

