Ladd, G. W. Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., Visconti, K. J., Ettekal, I., Sechler, C. M., & Cortes, K. I. (2014). Grade-school children’s social collaborative skills: Links with partner preference and achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 51*(1), 152-183. doi: 10.3102/0002831213507327

Abstract

Little is known about the skills children need to successfully collaborate with classmates on academic assignments. The purposes of this study were to identify grade-schoolers’ collaborative skills, evaluate the importance of identified skills for collaborative work, and determine whether differences in skill use were related to children’s social and scholastic competence. Initially, third through fifth graders (*N* = 113) described attributes of “good” collaborators, and these attributes were distilled into distinct skill categories or “types.” Next, third through fifth graders (*N* = 212) rated exemplars of each skill type as a basis for skill importance and peers’ skill use and provided data that were used to construct measures of work partner preference and peer acceptance. Teachers reported on participants’ achievement in multiple academic domains. Four categories of work-related and interpersonal skills were identified, and these skill types were differentially associated with children’s work partner preferences, peer acceptance, and achievement. Overall, the findings help to specify the types of skills grade-schoolers need to relate effectively with classmates in the context of collaborative academic tasks.

Keywords: collaborative skills, social skills, peer-mediated learning

Conklin, H. G. (2014). Toward more joyful learning: Integrating play into frameworks of middle grades teaching. *American Educational Research Journal, 51*(6), 1227-1255. doi: 10.3102/0002831214549451

Abstract

Recent efforts to define qualities of effective teaching practice have done little to capture the role of play, imagination, and creativity in classroom teaching. Drawing on theories of play and data from a two-year case study that included classroom observations, interviews, artifact collection, and surveys, the author examines the ways in which elements of play were present across the practice of eight novice middle grades teachers. Building on examples of play in these classrooms, the author proposes adding the dimension of play to frameworks of middle grades teaching—a dimension that encompasses young adolescents’ engagement in classroom work that involves choice and self-direction, imaginative creations, and a nonstressed state of interest and joy.

Keywords: middle grades teaching, play, beginning teachers, social studies teaching

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal, 106*(2), 105-130. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/499194

A decade ago, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler offered a model of the parental involvement process that focused on understanding why parents become involved in their children’s education and how their involvement influences student outcomes. Since then, we and others have conducted conceptual and empirical work to enhance understanding of processes examined in the model. In this article (companion to Walker and colleagues’ article about scale development on the model in this issue), we review recent work on constructs central to the model’s initial question: Why do parents become involved in children’s education? Based on this review, we offer suggestions for (1) research that may deepen understanding of parents’ motivations for involvement and (2) school and family practices that may strengthen the incidence and effectiveness of parental involvement across varied school communities.

Keller, P. S., Smith, O. A., Gilbert, L. R., Bi, S., Haak, E. A., & Buckhalt, J. A. (2015). Earlier school start times as a risk factor for poor school performance: An examination of public elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 107*(1), 236-243.

Abstract: Adequate sleep is essential for child learning. However, school systems may inadvertently be promoting sleep deprivation through early school start times. The current study examines the potential implications of early school start times for standardized test scores in public elementary schools in Kentucky. Associations between early school start time and poorer school performance were observed primarily for schools serving few students who qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches. Associations were controlled for teacher–student ratio, racial composition, and whether the school was in the Appalachian region. Findings support the growing body of research showing that early school start times may influence student learning but offer some of the first evidence that this influence may occur for elementary school children and depend on school characteristics.

Keywords: sleep, start time, school performance, free lunch

Fernández-Alonso, R., Suárez-Álvarez, J., & Muñiz, J. (2015). Adolescents’ homework performance in mathematics and science: Personal factors and teaching practices. Journal of Educational Psychology, 107(4), 1075-1085.

Abstract

Classical educational research provides empirical evidence of the positive effect of doing homework on academic results. Nonetheless, when this effect is analyzed in detail there are inconsistent, and in some cases, contradictory results. The central aim of this study was to systematically investigate the effect of homework on performance of students in mathematics and science using multilevel models. The original sample consisted of 7,725 Spanish adolescents with a mean age of 13.78 (0.82) of which 7,451 were evaluated after purging the sample of the students who did little to no homework. A 2-level hierarchical linear analysis was performed, student and class, with 4 individual adjustment variables: gender, socioeconomic and cultural level, year repetition, and school grades, which were used to reflect previous student achievement. The individual level examined time spent, effort made, and the way homework was done. The class level considered frequency of assignment and quantity of homework. Prior knowledge, estimated using school grades, is shown to be the most important predictor of achievement in the study. Its effect is greater than the combined effect of all the other variables studied. Once background factors are controlled, the homework variables with most impact on the test are student autonomy and frequency of homework assignment by teachers. Autonomy when doing homework was shown to be the most important individual-level variable in both mathematics and science, and not effort and or time spent doing homework. The optimum duration of homework was found to be 1 hr a day.

Keywords: homework, mathematics, science, academic performance, multilevel models

Nietfeld, J. L., Shores, L. R., & Hoffmann, K. F. (2014). Self-regulation and gender within a game-based learning environment. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*(4), 961-973.

In this study, we examined how self-regulated learning (SRL) and gender influences performance in an educational game for 8th-grade students (*N* = 130). Crystal Island–Outbreak is an immersive, inquiry-based, narrative-centered learning environment featuring a microbiology science mystery aligned with 8th-grade science curriculum. SRL variables predicted successful in-game performance even after accounting for prior knowledge and perceived gaming skill. Content learning gains were found across both genders, and girls performed at similar levels as boys in the game despite incoming disadvantages for perceived skill and prior gaming experience. Boys were more effective than girls in using a cognitive tool that was critical for solving the Crystal Island–Outbreak mystery; however, these differences disappeared when prior gaming experience was taken into account. Overconfidence on monitoring judgments for boys but not girls was predictive of in-game performance. Findings related to motivational variables such as self-efficacy, situational interest, and goal orientation were mixed with regard to their consistency across genders.

Keywords: self-regulated learning, gender, game-based learning, meta-cognition, motivation