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Executive functioning and school adjustment: the mediational role of pre-kindergarten learning-related behaviors.

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Summary: This longitudinal study tested the roles of pre-kindergarten executive function (EF) and learning-related behaviors as predictors of the level and rate of growth in children's academic performance and social adjustment from kindergarten through third grade. Growth curve models were used to estimate direct pathways between EF and trajectories of academic skill development (math, reading, overall academic functioning) and social-emotional adjustment (social competence, aggression), controlling for child gender, race, verbal IQ, and pre-kindergarten baseline scores. In addition, indirect pathways were explored, in which the association between pre-kindergarten EF and elementary school adjustment was mediated by learning-related behaviors. Pre-kindergarten EF directly predicted the level and rate of growth of later math skills and the level of teacher-rated academic functioning. Pre-kindergarten learning-related behaviors directly predicted the level and rate of growth of later reading skills, and the level of teacher-rated social competence and aggression. In addition, pre-kindergarten EF indirectly promoted later reading skills, social competence, and reduced aggression, via its association with learning-related behaviors. Findings from the present study suggest that a parallel focus on EF and learning-related behaviors is warranted in efforts to promote school readiness and adjustment.

Classification: C32 D31

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