

Buchwald, P. & Röhl, A. (2006). *Effects of Training Learning and Social Skills in German Students Entering a Middle School. Eingeladener Vortrag auf dem Symposium "Coping in the educational context: Learning and social and emotional outcomes"* (Chair: E. Frydenberg) der 26. International Conference for Applied Psychology (ICAP), 16.-21.7., Athen (Griechenland).

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Abstract

This longitudinal study aims at evaluating a social behavior and learning strategy training (Pöler-Klassen, 1997) that should enhance school performance. Data of a sample of 122 students were assessed at 6 measurement times over the course of one year (5th to 6th grade). Entering the world of middle school in the 5th grade students need to adapt to a completely new learning environment. Besides improving their learning strategies to meet the competing demands of the new school they have to integrate in a new peer group too. As social behavior has proven to be an important factor of school performance it was trained here in combination with learning strategies. The twofold training aimed at fostering students' growth by encouraging them to experiment with new learning strategies and to exercise social skills. The curriculum contains 60 social skill lessons and includes five skill groups: Classroom Survival Skills, Friendship-Making Skills, Dealing with Feelings, Alternatives to Aggression, and Dealing with Stress. Similarly, learning strategies were provided within 60 learning skills lessons. Through these activities, students should learn important strategies such as goal setting, problem solving, mind mapping and thinking aloud.

Training effects on students' achievement were generally found to be positive. Educational importance of training social and learning skills for social behavior and achievement will be discussed.