

Opinion: Teaching social skills makes a difference

By David Bornstein, New York Times

In the early 1990s, about 50 kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the social and communication skills of 753 children in their classrooms. It was part of the Fast Track Project, an intervention and study administered in Durham, N.C., Nashville, Seattle and central Pennsylvania. The goals were to understand how children develop healthy social skills, and help them do so.

Using an assessment tool called the “Social Competence Scale,” the teachers were asked to assign each child a score based on qualities that included “cooperates with peers without prompting”; “is helpful to others”; “is very good at understanding feelings”; and “resolves problems on own.”

This month, researchers from Pennsylvania State University and Duke published a study that looked at what had happened to those students in the 13 to 19 years since they left kindergarten. Their findings warrant major attention because the teachers’ rankings were extremely prescient.

Read the whole story