

Examining the Effects of *Kimochis* on Individual Student Behavioral-Emotional Functioning

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Background

- Social-emotional learning (SEL) is widely accepted as a universal, school-based approach to enhance student success in the school and community (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011). The ultimate goal of SEL is to help children to appropriately manage their behavioral-emotional functioning and maintain positive relationships with peers and adults.
- In a meta-analysis of 213 studies, SEL students from kindergarten through high school demonstrated significant improvements in behavior, social-emotional skills, and academic achievement compared to control groups (Durlak et al., 2011).
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) compiled three large-scale reviews of research and reported SEL programs enhance feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and academic achievement (Payton et al., 2008).
- CASEL identified five core competencies that effective SEL programs possess (Payton et al., 2008). *Kimochis*, a social-emotional learning intervention, incorporates the five core competencies in the social and emotional lessons within the *Kimochis* Feel Guide (Dodge, Rice, & Grimm, 2010).
- A few studies indicate social-emotional and academic improvements are related to the implementation of the *Kimochis* curriculum (Mitroff & Boddum, 2013; Stamper, 2016). Given *Kimochis* is a new intervention, further research will likely help determine program effectiveness and inform continued curriculum development.

Current Study

Purpose: To determine if a classwide, social-emotional learning intervention, *Kimochis*, helps to improve classroom and individual student behavior. The *Kimochis* curriculum aims to strengthen communication skills, respect, responsibility, and resilience for students.

Method

Participants:

- **Recruitment:** The principal from an elementary school in the Southeastern United States referred two classrooms (one general education classroom and one Exceptional Children's (EC) classroom) for the study. Office discipline referrals and Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ticket counts were used to refer the two classrooms. Classroom teachers referred two target students per classroom (four students in total).
- **Demographics:** A total of 15 students participated in the study. Classroom demographics were as follows: A second grade, general education classroom ($n = 10$; 4 males, 6 females); a kindergarten through second grade EC, Serious Emotional Disability (SED) classroom ($n = 5$; 2 males, 3 females). Target student demographics were as follows: Participant 1 – 7-years-old, female, SED classroom; Participant 2 – 7-years-old, male, SED classroom; Participant 3 – 8-years-old, male, general education classroom; Participant 4 – 8-years-old, female, general education classroom.

Procedures: Before implementation, IRB approval was obtained. Principal, teacher, and parent approvals were collected. Students provided verbal assent. Eight, weekly *Kimochis* lessons were implemented to each class respectively.

Measures:

- **Individual student assessment:** For each target or individual student, three unique target behaviors were measured once per week for approximately 15 minutes per session with a Direct Behavior Rating (DBR), Fill-In Behaviors Form. Support or resource staff volunteered and the principal investigator trained them to measure weekly, individual student behavior.

Results

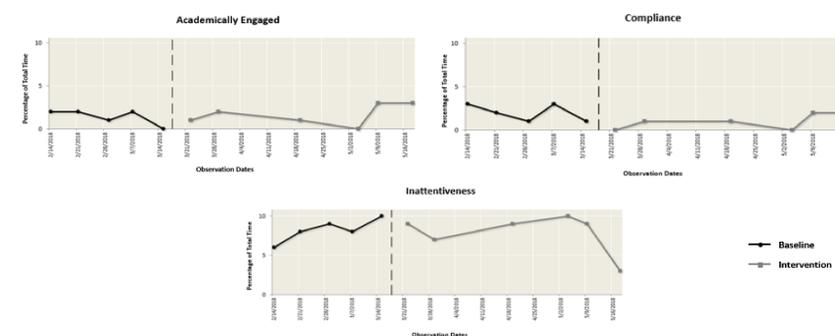
Table 1. Effect Sizes for Individual Student Behavioral-Emotional Functioning

	Academically Engaged	Compliance	Respectful	Disruptive	Inattentive
Participant 1	0.30	- 1.00	-	-	- 0.25
Participant 2	1.33	-	1.44	- 2.25	-
Participant 3	3.43	-	0.97	- 1.11	-
Participant 4	1.01	-	3.79	-	- 2.13

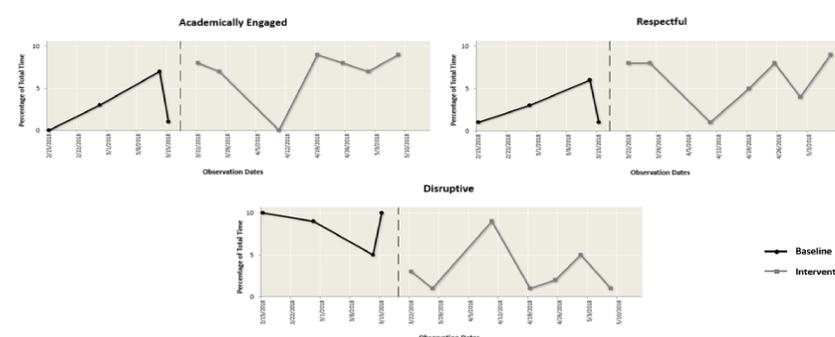
* (Small effect: < 0.87; Medium effect: 0.87 to 2.67; Large effect: > 2.67)

Figure 1. DBR Ratings for Individual Student Behavioral-Emotional Functioning

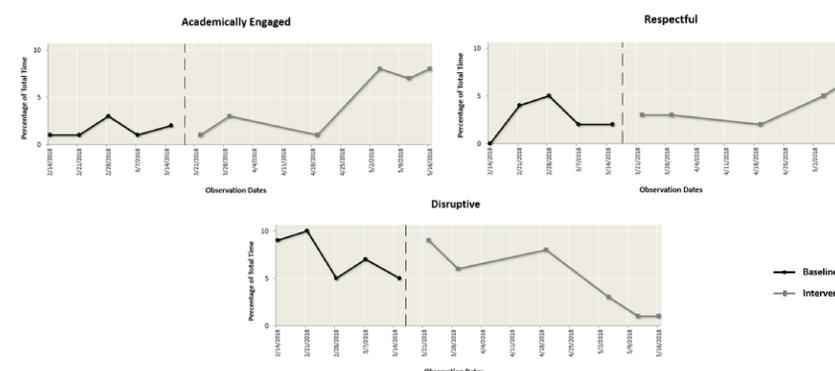
Participant 1



Participant 2

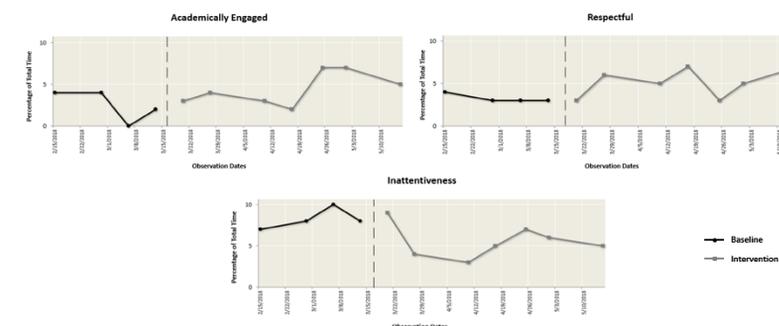


Participant 3



Results cont.

Participant 4



Conclusion

- The *Kimochis* intervention yielded improvements in unique or target behaviors for three of the four individual students. Students such as Participant 1 may benefit from more intensive, Tier-3 level behavioral interventions.
- Students in both the general education and SED classrooms demonstrated behavioral-emotional improvements.
- Student absences and/or suspensions may have impacted student behavior during the baseline or intervention phases.

Limitations:

- The current study has several limitations including a small overall sample ($N=15$) and small class sizes with unequal representation of students in each class. Designated observation times for individual students often conflicted with variable observer schedules.

Future Directions:

- Future studies may consider evaluating the impact of *Kimochis* on classwide student behavioral-emotional functioning by using pre and post teacher ratings for each student within a class.
- Researchers may train teachers and/or other educators within a school to implement *Kimochis* lessons and complete behavioral observations.
- The findings highlight the individual impact the *Kimochis* intervention may have on students. Future studies may consider small groups for children with specific concerns or difficulties (i.e., a small group for students with parents on deployment using the *Kimochis* character Hero from the Activity Kit for Military Families).

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