

What is the community challenge?

Children from low-income families face many challenges and risks related to their social-emotional development that can have negative consequences later in life. Without early intervention, children are at greater risk for academic problems, dropping out of school, peer rejection, and antisocial behaviors. On the other hand, strengthening young children's social-emotional competence may serve as an important protective factor for school and life success.

What is the promising solution?

WINGS for Kids® is a structured afterschool social and emotional learning (SEL) multi-year program for children entering kindergarten who can participate through 5th grade. WINGS' framework states that at least two years of participation would be required to show shifts in children's SEL competencies, including: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. The WINGS program was implemented at four low-performing schools in Charleston County, South Carolina, where groups of 12 boys or girls worked with a WINGS leader who served as a mentor and teacher.

What was the purpose of evaluation?

The evaluation of the WINGS program by CASTL began in 2012 with the first cohort of participants, and will complete a final report in December 2017 with results from three cohorts. The evaluation is a randomized control trial where children entering kindergarten are assigned to the program (in a group of boys or girls) or a control group. In the first two cohorts, 242 children have participated in the evaluation – about 58% in the program and 42% in the control conditions. The evaluation incorporates data from parents, teachers, WINGS staff, individual child testing and observational data. Research questions ask if WINGS has had a positive impact after the first and second year of participation on children's person-centered competencies, relationship and behaviors in the classroom and at home, short-term academic skills, and whether impacts vary depending on children's characteristics or level of initial skills.

What did the evaluation find?

As a subgrantee of the Social Innovation Fund, WINGS for Kids engaged an independent evaluator to evaluate the program as implemented in the Charleston County School District. The evaluation included an

Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund

Intervention: WINGS for Kids®

Subgrantee: WINGS for Kids

Intermediary: Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Focus Area: Youth Development

Focus Population(s): K-5 students

Community Served: Charleston County School District, South Carolina



implementation and impact study. While the final evaluation report has not been completed yet, interim results show preliminary impact for three cohorts of children after one year of participation (kindergarten), and two cohorts after two years of participation (kindergarten and first grade).

- The results of one year of participation show no significant effects, which is consistent with WINGS' theory that two years of participation is needed.
- In building block measures, children who attended WINGS for two years showed significant gains in naming vocabulary (effect size = .26, $p < 0.05$) and executive function (Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders, effect size = .26, $p < 0.10$).
- They also showed promising gains in positive classroom behavior and reducing negative classroom behaviors, although these do not reach the $p < 0.05$ significance level.

Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Design: Randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact evaluation

Study Population: Children in grades K-1

Evaluator: Team led by David Grissmer, Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), University of Virginia

This Evaluation's Level of Evidence*: Moderate

*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

Notes on the evaluation

The implementation study found that changes to school locations, schedules, and school personnel limited the potential for WINGS program impacts, as well as changes in WINGS staff at program sites. In addition, WINGS' minimum attendance criteria (100 days of attendance in kindergarten and first grade) was met by only 37% of participants in the first cohort and 42% in the second cohort. For many of these children (60%), this was due to relocation to another school without the WINGS program.

The final evaluation report, with impact results from three cohorts of participants, is expected in December 2017. However, the current interim results support a moderate level of evidence of effectiveness.

How is WINGS for Kids using the evaluation findings to improve?

The report suggests the following improvements for the WINGS program:

- Consider putting the youngest children (kindergarten and first graders) in cafeterias and/or auditoriums rather than classrooms to limit distractions.
- Provide additional and varying activities for different ages of children in the curriculum to improve engagement and retention.
- Develop a more defined WINGS leader career program to decrease turnover.
- Pair WINGS leaders on a regular basis, preferably pairing an experienced leader with a less experienced leader. Interviews suggest leaders enjoy the support and can better engage and manage children.

Charleston County, SC



The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.