

SOCIAL COMPETENCE AS A PRECURSOR TO INCREASED SELF-CONCEPT AND SCHOOL READINESS

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ABSTRACT

This study shows support for social competence, as a strength-based construct, as a precursor to increased self-concept or self-esteem, and increased school readiness. Since positive self-concept has been shown to be a protective factor against negative social influences, and school readiness in Kindergarten has shown to predict later academic and social success, this model demonstrates a need for more focus on social *competence in the early years*. Social competence was framed as an entirely strength-based construct called positive social competence which incorporated skills, relationships and goals. Self-concept incorporated measures of the child's expression of their accomplishments, how well the child works with peers and how well he or she describes himself or herself, and how well the child copes with correction or failure. *Finally, school readiness was an environmentally-focused construct, aimed to relate to the match between the child and the school setting*. Data resulted in a well fitting model overall with significant pathways from social competence to both outcome variables. *This study indicates that developing more programs that focus on increased social competence in the early years can help students succeed in school, and make better life choices.*

Key Words: Social competence, preschool, school readiness, self-concept, self-esteem.