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Research Snapshot No. 24

*“A Preschool Rhythm and Movement Intervention:
RCT Evidence for Improved Social and
Behavioural Development.”*

Authors are Kate Williams and Laura Bentley

In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



*Presented by... Trish Wachtel,
Developmental Educator*

What do you need to know?

- + Music and movement have been part of how humans connect, communicate, and learn across cultures throughout history. In early childhood, we see this every day – through songs, action rhymes, dance, and play.
- + In clinical settings, **music therapy** is already well established as a way to support children's social skills and wellbeing. However, what's been **less clear** is whether **structured music and movement programs** can benefit *non-clinical* populations – that is, children in everyday early learning settings.

What is this research about?

- + RAMSR (Rhythm and Movement for Self-Regulation) is a music and movement program that translates principles from music psychology, music education, and music therapy into an accessible and engaging classroom-based program that can be delivered by generalists' educators with no prior music experience.
- + This study evaluated the impact of (RAMSR) intervention on children's early social and emotional development; documenting benefits related to increased prosocial skills and reduced behaviour challenges for educators across the transition to school period.
- + This study contributes to an emerging body of work that investigates the role of shared rhythmic movement participation in supporting social development.

What did the researchers do?

- + The researchers completed a randomised control trial that involved **213 children across eight preschools**.
- + The intervention group received **16 to 20 sessions of RAMSR over eight weeks** while the control group undertook usual preschool programs.
- + The researchers used **four subscales from the Child Self-Regulation and Behaviour Questionnaire** to collect data via teacher reporting. Data was collected **pre and post intervention and again six months later once children had transitioned into their first year of school**.

What did the researchers find?

Children who participated in RAMSR showed:

- + **significantly steeper growth in prosocial skills** compared to the control group
- + **reduced internalising and externalising behaviour challenges for educators** during the transition to school

Interestingly:

- + There were **no significant differences** in general sociability skills

How can you use this research?

- + You can use this research in very practical, real-world ways, especially if you work with younger children, design programs, or support early childhood development. The article shows strong evidence that rhythm and movement sessions, when done intentionally and consistently, can improve prosocial behaviour and reduce behaviour difficulties in preschoolers.
- + This research paper provides high-quality evidence for a low cost, scalable intervention that is able to be delivered by generalists in everyday settings where children learn and play. This research can be used to support program funding or policy changes.

How does this research align with the Framework?

- The intervention is **evidence informed**
- The intervention is **universal and preventative**– targeting protective factors of self-regulation and prosocial behaviours.
- Embedded in **existing daily routines** in places where children live, learn and play.
- Activities reflect **play based, developmentally appropriate practices**.
- Supports **workforce sustainability** and emphasises **building the capacity** of the everyday workforce
- Scalable and cost effective
- Focus on **inclusion** rather than segregating children

Where to from here?

The researchers suggest several next steps:

- + Services may explore **RAMSR training** to support high-fidelity implementation
- + Organisations could trial **short-term pilots** to assess fit within their contexts

Discussion questions you might like to consider:

- + Where do rhythm and movement already happen in your setting?
 - + How intentional are these experiences?
 - + What opportunities might exist to trial a structured approach like RAMSR?
 - + What supports would educators need to implement this confidently?
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About the researchers

Kate Williams

Kate Williams is an Associate Professor in the School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, QUT. She leads the Centre for Child & Family Studies and is Academic Lead (Engagement) for her school. Kate is also a member of the Centre for Child Health & Wellbeing.

Dr Laura Bentley

Dr Laura Bentley is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Child Health Research Centre at The University of Queensland. Laura has a background in developmental psychology and her PhD explored the impact of music on early cognition and self-regulation skills.

Citation

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!