

BrainTrain Bugle

Brains Matter!

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Research shows brain training in school can improve classroom behavior



A growing body of research supports that cognitive training can ameliorate deficits in working memory, attention, and other learning difficulties in children (Holmes, Gathercole, & Dunning, 2009; Kirk, et al., 2015.) Since working memory and attention skills have been shown to be important predictors of academic success, impacting reading, writing, and math, it would be logical to assume that training to enhance these cognitive skills would improve performance in the academic areas that depend on them. This hypothesis was supported in a 2010 study by Rabiner et al. showing that students trained with the Captain's Log MindPower Builder scored significantly higher on reading outcome measures than both controls and students who were trained with a reading program.

An interesting study by Wiest, et al., presented at the European Congress of Psychology in 2015, examined not only whether cognitive training enhanced attention, working memory, and classroom learning, but also whether it generalized to improved behavior in the classroom. In this study, students ages 7 – 13 at a private school for individuals with learning differ-

ences were given computerized cognitive training using the Captain's Log MindPower Builder system. Prior to the training, teachers completed a checklist as part of a beginning of the school-year baseline index of school-related concerns, and students were pretested on the WRAML-2. Next, fifty students were randomly assigned in equal number to either the cognitive training intervention or the wait-list control group. The students in the cognitive training group received 20 hours of training using the Captain's Log MindPower Builder. Following the training, all students were again administered the WRAML-2, and teachers completed the checklist for each of the participants. There was a 15% improvement for both the visual and auditory working memory scores on the WRAML-2 for the group receiving cognitive training. In addition, the cognitive training group improved significantly in their focused, sustained and shifting attention, and in both working memory and executive functioning based on the teacher's ratings. No differences were found for these cognitive skills for the control group.

The results of this study showed that computerized cognitive training improves executive functioning, working memory, and many aspects of attentional functioning. The cognitive training intervention was found to be easily integrated into the school-day, and the positive effects of the training generalized to improvements in classroom behavior that were clearly noticeable by the teachers.

The findings of this study are consistent with the improvements found in other research that evaluated the effectiveness of computerized cognitive training. Thus, brain training was found to be a valuable evidence based component for facilitating learning in the school setting.

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