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Education

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Play skills build on success

MARTINA SIMOS EDUCATION WRITER

TEACHING youngsters from an early age how to take turns or how to play co-operatively are essential social and emotional skills that will help improve their success at school, an academic says.

Two university studies released recently by the University of NSW have linked children's well-developed social and emotional behaviours (SEB) to later success in literacy and numeracy skills.

One report, *Social and*

Emotional Behavioural Profiles in Kindergarten: A population-based latent Profile Analysis of Links to Socio-Educational Characteristics and Later Achievement, was published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

The large study assessed the skills of 153,000 kindergarten children in five areas – co-operative, socially responsible, helpful, anxious and aggressive-disruptive behaviours. From this, researchers created four major profiles:

THE pro-social profile — this group had above-average



STUDY: Dr Rebecca Collie.

levels of social behaviour and low levels of less positive behaviour.

THE anxious profile – had a mixture of positive behaviours but high levels of anxious behaviours.

THE aggressive profile – this

group showed above average anxious/aggressive-disruptive behaviours

THE vulnerable profile – displayed low levels of social behaviour and very high anxious and aggressive-disruptive behaviour

Co-author and UNSW senior lecturer in educational psychology Dr Rebecca Collie says the large study provides a clear picture of what is happening across kindergartens in NSW.

“What is great about the study is we looked at links with Grade 3 and 5 achievements and we found

this prosocial profile had the highest achievement five years later, across reading, writing and numeracy,” she says.

“When we have population-level data, we are able to say this is what is happening across all kids in kindy in NSW.

“It is my firm belief that social and emotional domains are very important.”

Dr Collie says though the research, backing the importance of social and emotional behaviours, is not new, the large study backs it with evidence.

“Most teachers already

know these are important but it's nice to have the empirical evidence to really highlight just how significant it is to kids,” she says.

The report also found research in this area was limited to looking into one area of SEB in isolation.

“An increasing body of person-centred SEB research has emerged in recent years,” the report says. “Thus knowledge of how multiple SEBs manifest simultaneously within students is limited.

“The purpose of the current investigation was to address these gaps in the literature.”