



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Devin Simpson, (301) 485-4367, devin@thehatchergroup.com

National Nonprofit Releases Report Calling for Brain Fitness Interventions in All U.S. Schools

*New Research Emphasizes Need to Focus on Students' Executive Function Skills;
Assesses Existing Classroom-Based Programs*

BALTIMORE – BrainFutures released a report today that makes a clear case for integrating proven brain fitness programs into all U.S. classrooms. Over a decade of research has shown that evidence-based programs can improve students' executive function skills and prosocial behaviors, which are more accurate predictors of academic readiness and life success than IQ or any other performance markers.

Brain Fitness and Executive Function: Evidence-Based Interventions That Improve Student Outcomes details the importance of foundational executive function skills - working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility - on academic performance and how classroom programs can help improve those skills. These skills are inextricably linked to social emotional learning (SEL).

Of immediate use to educators and school leaders, the report presents a vetted set of brain fitness programs that meet the evidence-based standards of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The report highlights classroom interventions specifically because they allow all students to engage in the program together without stigmatizing those with the greatest deficits. It calls for all schools to adopt these types of programs and ensure that executive function training is a standard component of teacher certification programs.

The report analyzes 29 brain fitness interventions already being used in schools, including cognitive training programs, mindfulness tools, and executive function skills curricula. Each program was assessed against a set of rigorous standards established by the BrainFutures' advisory group. Those programs have yielded proven outcomes for students, including increases in proficiency on state-mandated standardized tests and school-administered tests, reductions in disruptive school behaviors, and increases in prosocial behaviors.

"We now have a road map to achieving sizeable improvements in our students' academic performance. Some of the programs that we evaluated yielded 80% pass rates on state standardized reading tests, resulted in 28% higher grades in core subjects, and decreased behavioral issues by 60%," said Linda Raines, chief executive officer of BrainFutures. "Our children are waiting for us to catch up with the research and implement programs that work."

Nearly half of all U.S. children are affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as family deaths, violence in their communities, poverty, neglect, divorce, and other challenges. Additionally, stress and depression rates are growing among young students, which negatively impact a child's ability to learn effectively. In 2015 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) assessed the academic proficiency of 15-year-old students from 35 countries, ranking U.S. students 19th in science, 20th in reading, and 30th in mathematics. BrainFutures contends that brain fitness interventions are not only critical to support individual students but to also help our country maintain its position as an international leader.

"As a parent, and as a former teacher, I want all children to thrive physically and emotionally," said Amy Kennedy, Education Director of The Kennedy Forum. "This report clearly demonstrates that we can improve executive function skills that help kids focus their attention, process information, remember instructions, and juggle tasks. So, by prioritizing such skills in classrooms, we have an opportunity not only to optimize learning, but also to reduce the risk of mental health challenges later in life."

Brain Fitness and Executive Function: Evidence-Based Interventions That Improve Student Outcomes is part of a nationwide movement to emphasize the connection between youth brain development and life outcomes. In addition to the growing body of research on this subject, the programs outlined in the report have been adopted in over 7,200 schools across the country, a 40% increase over the last four years. The issue brief is the first of three to be released this year by BrainFutures, a national nonprofit working to accelerate the adoption of brain science advances that maximize human potential.

"School improvement strategies should be designed to ensure that every student receives the appropriate level of support to be successful," said Rosalyn Rice-Harris, program director for school improvement at the Council of Chief State School Officers. "Among the ways we can advance school improvement processes and systems is through using evidence-based practices that focus on addressing barriers to student learning, such as trauma and school readiness, so that they can excel academically."

Visit BrainFutures' website to read the [full report](#) and access an in-depth analysis of existing brain fitness programs.

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About BrainFutures

BrainFutures is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to assessing and advancing the practical application of neuroscience research to maximize human potential. Breakthroughs in our understanding of the brain have the potential to improve learning outcomes for children, maintain sharp thinking as we age, optimize functioning at work, and enhance treatment for a mental health or substance use problem. Since 2015, BrainFutures has provided rigorous analyses of new brain health research to share how advances can positively affect all areas of life. To learn more about BrainFutures, please visit www.brainfutures.org