

BACK TO SCHOOL

PSU Professor Awarded Federal Grant for Preschool Program

The MindUp program will be introduced into 120 preschool classrooms in Oregon for a five-year study on developing social-emotional skills in early learners

The Skanner News

Portland State University professor Andrew Mashburn was recently awarded a \$3.3 million federal grant to implement a unique program

that readies underserved preschool children for kindergarten and beyond.

Called MindUp, the program was initially started by actress Goldie Hawn's foundation and provides supplementary

curriculum to K through 8 classrooms. It also offers a preschool version, which Mashburn will be testing for the first time in 120 classrooms over the next five years.

MindUp's curriculum is essentially designed to assist children in developing social-emotional and self-regulation skills. It encompasses specific activities such as focusing their attention, following instructions, cooperating with fellow students, and managing their feelings and behaviors.



Andrew Mashburn, associate professor in Applied Developmental Psychology at Portland State University.

As a developmental psychologist, the program is a good fit for Mashburn's research, which focuses primarily on four-year-old preschoolers who are transitioning into kindergarten.

"We know that the moment when kids enter kindergarten is a really important time in their lives, and that the skills they've acquired up to that point - and the opportunities they've been provided to develop those skills - are predictive of their later skills and achievements in third grade, eighth grade, and even later grades," Mashburn told *The Skanner*.

He also added that the economic returns of investing early on in the lives of children has a strong payoff in the long term, when compared

to addressing problems once they've already emerged.

"My work is really about promoting the skills of young children, so that when they enter kindergarten they're ready to go and they're on a pathway towards success," he said.

MindUp is currently in its pilot phase, during which time Mashburn and his team will be studying the implementation of the program into 10 Portland preschools. This includes teacher training, providing curriculum and materials, individual classroom check-ins with a program mentor, and hosting group meetings between the schools to workshop MindUp's progress.

Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, MindUp will launch its first official phase in Multnomah County, followed by Washington County in 2020-21, and finally Clackamas County in 2021-22.

Each cohort will also have a "waitlist" control group to monitor the difference between students participating in MindUp and those students who are learning from their regular

curriculum. After one year, the waitlist class can then employ MindUp's programming.

"That's the basis by which we tell if it works," said Mashburn. "We make those comparisons between the MindUp classrooms and the waitlist control classrooms to look at any differences among the kids' outcomes."

The study's participating classrooms will be largely comprised of social and economically-disadvantaged children from a patchwork of preschools, including state and federally-funded programs, as well as both not-for-profit and small for-profit classrooms.

"This is where the meat is, these are the kids that need this program the most," Mashburn said. "So for us, the biggest bang for our buck in terms of making a difference in the lives of kids entering kindergarten, would be to focus on providing resources for underserved kids and underserved preschool classrooms, which typically aren't part of professional development networks, like what we're offering."

2019

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Poll: Support for School Choice Growing Among Republicans

More than half of Republicans support charter schools, where 36 percent of Democrats do

By *Maria Danilova*
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Support for charter schools and private school voucher programs has gone up over the past year, with Republicans accounting for much of the increase, according to a survey published Tuesday.

The findings by Education Next, a journal published by Harvard's Kennedy School and Stanford University, come as Education Secretary Betsy DeVos promotes alternatives to traditional public schools.

Forty-four percent of respondents in the poll conducted in May said they support the expansion of charter schools, compared to 39 percent in 2017. The gain of 5 percentage points, however, did not fully offset the drop in support from 51 percent in 2016.

When broken down according to party affiliation, 57 percent of Republicans and 36 percent of Democrats voiced support for charter schools, compared to 47 percent of Republicans and 34 percent of Democrats in 2017.

"Support is up among Republicans for various strategies to expand school choice, and the Trump administration's embrace of those policies is a likely explanation," said Martin West,

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