

The Zones of Regulation®: **Study Snapshot**

The Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum (Kuypers, 2024) supports the social, emotional, and behavioral development of learners from early childhood through adulthood, and is primarily used in elementary and middle school settings. In The Zones, feelings, energy, and regulation tools are categorized into four colored “Zones”: Blue, Green, Yellow, and Red. This simple framework helps learners develop communication around their emotions, problem-solving skills, and regulation competencies. The Digital Curriculum is designed for flexible implementation and tiered support, as it can be used for universal instruction (Tier 1) and targeted intervention (Tiers 2 and 3). The Zones of Regulation fosters a common language and school climate where feelings are welcome, regulation is the norm, and wellness thrives.

Study Overview

The University of Minnesota conducted a study in the 2023–2024 school year to evaluate the impact of The Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum on students’ social-emotional development. Teachers at intervention schools implemented the Digital Curriculum weekly for four months, with pre- and post-assessments indicating improvement in students’ skills. The study involved five elementary schools in a large Midwestern public school district, with three schools participating as intervention sites and two as comparison sites. The research methodology meets Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Evidence for ESSA criteria Tier 2 (Moderate) evidence.

This study evaluated the impact of The Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum on students’ social-emotional competencies as measured by the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment-Mini (DESSA-Mini; Naglieri et al., 2014). The DESSA-Mini provides a T-score (standardized score with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10) and classification ranges based on T-scores (Strength, Typical, Need for Instruction). Students with T-scores of 60 and above fall in the Strength range, between 41 and 59 in the Typical range, and 40 or below in the Need for Instruction range. The impact of the Digital Curriculum was analyzed through (1) pre-test and post-test standardized scores and (2) the change in students’ classification within the DESSA-Mini ranges.

Key Findings

Students using The Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum showed significant improvements in social-emotional competencies compared to students receiving business-as-usual instruction.

- Students in the intervention group showed an average increase of 8.84 points in their DESSA-Mini T-scores, compared to a 1.09-point increase in the comparison group (Table 1).
- The number of students at intervention sites identified as needing social-emotional instruction dropped significantly (Table 2).
- The proportion of students classified in the Strength range for social-emotional competencies doubled, increasing from 28% at pre-test to 55% at post-test (Table 2).
- In contrast, students at comparison sites showed little to no change in their classification ranges from pre-test to post-test (Table 2).

These improvements highlight a strong relationship between the use of The Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum and increased social-emotional competencies.

Table 1. DESSA-Mini T-Score Means and Standard Deviations

	Sample Size	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Pre-Post Mean Difference
Intervention Site	376 students	50.71 (12.91)	59.55 (12.21)	8.84
Comparison Site	289 students	53.09 (10.59)	54.18 (10.97)	1.09

Table 2. Percentage of Students in Each DESSA-Mini Classification Range (Pre- to Post-Test)

	Pre-Test % of Students by Classification Range	Post-Test % of Students by Classification Range
Intervention Site		
Need for Instruction	23.67%	9.57%
Typical	48.67%	35.90%
Strength	27.66%	54.52%
Comparison Site		
Need for Instruction	10.03%	6.92%
Typical	62.28%	65.05%
Strength	27.68%	28.03%

References

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