

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using a Brain Plasticity-Based Program in a Classroom Setting

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Computer programs that seek to improve the cognitive abilities of older adults have recently become a focus for research. Among them, Posit Science's Brain Fitness Program stands out as one that has not only been validated with this population, but also with groups of older adults affected by Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). The typical research protocol dictates that the program be completed by individuals in their homes with scheduled visits from research assistants; however, this ultimately limits its availability. In the current study, a group of eleven older adults (4 African American, 7 European American) used the Posit Science Brain Fitness Program in a classroom setting for 20 sessions over a period of eight weeks to determine the effectiveness of using such a program in a classroom setting. This exploratory pilot study seeks to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of making the program available to older adults in a classroom setting. Advantages of a classroom setting included being able to reach a wider audience of older adults, completing the program in a pro-social environment, and augmenting proficiency in computer skills. Disadvantages of a classroom setting included ambient noise, inconsistent attendance, and the possibility of progress comparisons among classmates. Preliminary pilot results indicate that using computer-assisted learning programs in a classroom setting could be an efficient way to reach a wider audience of older adults.