Social and Academic Learning Study on the Responsive Classroom® Approach
2001–2004

Summary of Findings

From 2001 to 2004, researchers at the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education conducted a three-year longitudinal, quasi-experimental study on how the Responsive Classroom approach affects children’s academic and social skills. They compared children at six schools in an urban district in the Northeast—three schools that implemented the Responsive Classroom approach and three that did not. The study, led by associate professor of education Sara E. Rimm-Kaufman and funded by the DuBarry Foundation, found that the Responsive Classroom approach is associated with better academic and social outcomes for elementary school children.

The study yielded six key findings about children and teachers at schools using the Responsive Classroom approach:

Finding 1
Children showed greater increases in reading and math test scores.

Finding 4
Teachers offered more high-quality instruction.

Finding 2
Teachers felt more effective and more positive about teaching.

Finding 5
Children felt more positive about school.

Finding 3
Children had better social skills.

Finding 6
Teachers collaborated with each other more.

Children taught using the Responsive Classroom approach for two or three years scored higher in reading and math in the Connecticut Mastery Test. The gains were greater over three-year periods than over two-year periods, and greater in math than in reading.

Teachers using the Responsive Classroom approach appeared to offer more emotional support for learning (for example, creating a positive classroom climate) and more instructional support for learning (such as, better feedback and more instruction involving concept development).

Children whose teachers used more Responsive Classroom practices had improved attitudes about school. They liked school more and enjoyed their peers and their teachers more.

For a full report of this study, see “Social and Academic Learning Study on the Contribution of the Responsive Classroom Approach” by Sara E. Rimm-Kaufman, available at www.responsiveclassroom.org/about/research.html
Papers Based on the Social and Academic Learning Study


