

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.

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.

FINDING 2

Teachers felt more effective and
more positive about teaching.

Teachers who used the *Responsive Classroom* approach felt more effective in discipline, more able to create a positive school climate, and more able to influence decision making at their schools.

FINDING 3

Children had better social skills.

After just one year of the *Responsive Classroom* approach, children showed greater growth in prosocial skills and assertiveness. They were more comfortable trying new things in school, and their teachers reported feeling closer to them.

FINDING 4

Teachers offered more high-quality
instruction.

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).

FINDING 5

Children felt more positive about school.

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.

FINDING 6

Teachers collaborated with each other more.

Teachers using the *Responsive Classroom* approach reported more frequent formal collaboration with each other. They placed greater value on collaboration and felt more involved in decision making at their schools.

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

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- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Fan, X., Chiu, Y. I., and You, W. In press. The contribution of the *Responsive Classroom* approach on children's academic achievement: Results from a three year longitudinal study. *Journal of School Psychology*.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., and Sawyer, B. E. 2004. Primary-grade teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, attitudes toward teaching, and discipline and teaching practice priorities in relation to the *Responsive Classroom* approach. *Elementary School Journal*, 104, 321-341.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Skibbe, L., Decker, L., La Paro, K., and Pianta, R. C. Under review. Use of the *Responsive Classroom* approach: Implications for classroom quality and teaching practices.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Storm, M., Sawyer, B., Pianta, R. C., and La Paro, K. 2006. The Teacher Belief Q-Sort: A measure of teachers' priorities and beliefs in relation to disciplinary practices, teaching practices, and beliefs about children. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 141-165.
- Sawyer, B. E. and Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. In press. Teacher collaboration in the context of the *Responsive Classroom* approach. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*.