

# Responsive Classroom Efficacy Study

From 2008 to 2011, researchers at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education conducted a three-year randomized controlled study led by Dr. Sara Rimm-Kaufman. The Responsive Classroom Efficacy Study (RCES), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES), involved 24 elementary schools in a large district in a mid-Atlantic state. The schools were assigned randomly to intervention and comparison groups. The study followed 350 teachers and over 2,900 students from the spring of the students' second grade year to the spring of their fifth grade year.

**Benefits of Using *Responsive Classroom* Practices:** Researchers found that teachers' use of *Responsive Classroom* practices was associated with the following positive outcomes.

## 1 Improved Student Achievement

Teachers' use of *Responsive Classroom* practices predicted gains in student math and reading achievement. In addition, researchers found the following:

- **Academic Choice:** Teachers' use of *Responsive Classroom* Academic Choice, specifically, was associated with reading and math achievement outcomes.
- **Socio-economics:** The associations between *Responsive Classroom* practices and achievement were equally strong for children eligible for free/reduced price lunch and those not eligible.
- **Greater effect on low-achieving students:** The association between teachers' use of

*Responsive Classroom* practices and math achievement appeared to be stronger for students who were initially low achieving than for others.

## 2 Improved Teacher-Student Interactions

Teachers' increased use of *Responsive Classroom* practices was related to classrooms that were more emotionally supportive and organized. Specifically:

- **Morning Meeting:** Teachers' use of *Responsive Classroom* Morning Meeting was related to improved emotional support for students and improved classroom organization.
- **Academic Choice:** Teachers' use of Academic Choice was also related to improved emotional support during math instruction.

## 3 Higher Quality Instruction in Mathematics

Teachers' use of *Responsive Classroom* practices was associated with more skillful standards-based mathematics instruction. For example, teachers demonstrated the following:

- Higher levels of mathematical discourse
- Better use of and translation among mathematical representations
- Lessons with greater cognitive depth
- Lessons with greater coherence and accuracy

## Importance of Support for Teachers

According to researchers, teachers reported that a supportive setting is important to their implementation of *Responsive Classroom* practices. Specifically, teachers were more likely to use these practices when:

- Their principal showed buy-in to the *Responsive Classroom* approach.
- They received coaching while implementing new *Responsive Classroom* practices.
- Their school climate offered validation and social support for trying the *Responsive Classroom* approach and allowed them to adopt the approach at their own pace.

Developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children, the *Responsive Classroom* approach consists of practical strategies for helping children build academic, social, and emotional competencies.

For more information, visit [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org).

## *Papers Based on the Responsive Classroom Efficacy Study*

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- Griggs, M. S., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Merritt, E. G., & Patton, C. L. 2013. The *Responsive Classroom* approach and fifth grade students' math and science anxiety and self-efficacy. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 28(4), 360–373. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000026>
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- Ottmar, E. R., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Larsen, R. A., & Berry, R. Q. In press. Relations among mathematical knowledge for teaching, teacher quality, and student achievement in the context of the *Responsive Classroom* approach. *American Education Research Journal*.
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