



## **Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility**

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### **Effectiveness of Morningside Center's School-based Programs**

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility has a 25-year track record of successful collaboration with the New York City public schools. Our programs are research-based and rigorous scientific studies have demonstrated their effectiveness.

#### **1) The 4Rs Research Program**

The 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Research & Resolution) integrates conflict resolution into the language arts curriculum. The program uses high-quality children's literature as a springboard for helping students gain skills and understanding in seven theme areas: building community, feelings, listening, assertiveness, problem solving, diversity, and cooperation.

In 2003, we initiated a rigorous scientific evaluation of The 4Rs Program in collaboration with top researchers at New York University and Fordham University. The 4Rs Research Project is part of a national study of social and character development programs, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the federal Centers for Disease Control. Researchers measured the effects of The 4Rs over three years on children in nine NYC public schools as compared to nine control schools.

Final results of the research study will be released (and published in peer-reviewed journals) during the next 12-18 months. Preliminary findings are available for years one and two, and they are quite positive. Over the first two years of the study, children in 4Rs schools showed lower rates of depression and hostile attribution bias (the tendency to ascribe hostile motives to others in ambiguous situations) than children in the control schools. Teachers in the 4Rs schools also reported declines in children's attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms compared to increases in control schools, and increases in social competence, compared to declines in the control schools. Teachers in the 4Rs schools reported significantly slower growth in children's aggression—compared to steep increases in the control schools.

Significantly, children at greatest behavioral risk in 4Rs schools had better attendance than their counterparts in the control schools, and teachers gave them higher ratings for academic progress. In the second year, those positive impacts continued, and in addition, the high-risk students receiving The 4Rs also did better on standardized tests compared with their peers in the nine control schools.

#### **2) The Resolving Conflict Creatively Research Program**

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), which we co-founded with the NYC Board of Education in 1985, is one of the nation's largest and most effective school-based conflict resolution programs. The core component of the RCCP is professional development (training and coaching) to

prepare teachers to provide regular classroom instruction in conflict resolution for their students, helping students develop such skills as active listening, assertiveness, handling feelings, negotiation, mediation, celebrating differences, and standing up to bias. The program also includes peer mediation and parent workshop components.

In December 2003, researchers at Columbia University released the final report on their major scientific study of the effectiveness of the RCCP. The study, which tracked the development of 5,000 children and 300 teachers from 15 NYC public elementary schools over two years, found that compared with students who had little or no exposure to the program, children who received substantial instruction in the RCCP developed more positively. They showed less tendency to attribute hostile motives to others in ambiguous situations; showed less tendency to choose aggressive strategies for solving conflicts; showed greater tendency to choose competent strategies for solving conflicts; showed greater tendency to believe that violence is wrong; and made more academic progress as measured by standardized test scores. Children from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds benefited from the program. A teacher perception study conducted by the Center for Children and Technology, Education Development Corporation, found that teachers viewed the RCCP as having a positive impact on their teaching, their personal lives, their students' attitudes and behaviors, and on their school environment.

The Columbia University study found “compelling evidence that [the RCCP] reduces aggression and violence in children and youth and enhances their classroom learning. This independent evaluation of the program shows it is relatively low in cost and not purchased at the expense of academic achievement

The research documenting the effectiveness of the RCCP has been reported in a number of peer-reviewed journals, including *Development and Psychopathology*, the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *Developmental Psychology's* special issue on “Violence in Middle Childhood,” and the *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

### **3) SAMHSA Excellence Award**

In January 2005, the RCCP was given an “Excellence Award” by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA has officially designated the RCCP as an “effective program” that is “well-implemented,” “well-evaluated,” and has shown a “consistent positive pattern of results.” This designation makes the program eligible for Safe and Drug-Free Schools funding.

### **4) CASEL Select Program**

A three-year study conducted by the prestigious Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) ranked the RCCP as one of the 22 “Select Social-Emotional Programs” in the nation that are “especially effective and comprehensive in their social-emotional learning coverage, their documented impacts, and the staff development they provide.”