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A Multi-Level Investigation of Teacher Instructional Practices and the Use of Responsive Classroom

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Abstract

A year-long longitudinal study was conducted to quantify different types of teaching in the beginning of the year, and the effect of those choices on end of year instructional practices and student outcomes. Teacher practices were organized around the fidelity of implementation to the Responsive Classroom (RC) program (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2009). Most notably, a central RC tenant entitled "the first six weeks" was examined. RC is a universal prevention program that previously has been categorized as a Tier I social-behavioral program for students when considered within an RTI model (Elliott, 1999).

Twenty-seven teachers from the New England region and 179 students participated. The Academic Competence Evaluation Scales (ACES), teacher-form (DiPerna & Elliott, 2000) was used to measure student outcomes. The Classroom Practice Measure (CPM; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2007) was used to measure level of RC implementation. Finally, to quantify teaching behavior, a momentary time-sampling observation, called the Teaching Observation Tool (TOT; Marcotte, Klein, & Solomon, 2010), was implemented.

Results from a series of multilevel models utilizing students nested within teachers indicated that both a constant, high level of instructional time and investment in environmental management time in the fall results in higher levels of student reading (significant) and math achievement (non-significant) in the spring, and lower levels of time spent correcting behavior. Teachers with large discrepancies in instructional time from fall to spring and teachers who failed to release environmental control to students over time had students with lower levels of reading and math growth.

Relationships between the CPM, ACES, and the TOT indicate that RC is significantly correlated with increases in student reading achievement and motivation beyond what would be expected of a teacher that does not implement RC. However, in contrast to past research, RC in this study was not correlated with teacher reported improvements in social skills. Implications for practice and directions for future research are discussed.

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