



## Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

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# The 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution)

The 4Rs Program integrates social and emotional learning (SEL) and language arts for pre-kindergarten to middle school. Through the program, Morningside Center provides training and classroom coaching to prepare teachers to teach weekly lessons based on The 4Rs curriculum.

The 4Rs uses high-quality children's literature and engaging interactive activities to develop students' skills and understanding in seven areas: building community, understanding and handling feelings, listening, assertiveness, problem-solving, dealing well with diversity, and cooperation. The 4Rs curriculum is grade-specific: Each grade has its own teaching guide, books, and age-appropriate activities.

Each 4Rs unit begins with a Read Aloud of a children's book, carefully chosen for its high literary quality and relevance to the theme. Next is Book Talk — discussion, writing, and roleplay to deepen students' understanding of the book and connect it to their lives. Then comes Applied Learning — skills practice related to the theme.

By highlighting universal themes of conflict, feelings, relationships, and community, the 4Rs curriculum adds meaning and depth to literacy instruction. Since reading and writing are excellent tools for exploring conflict, feelings, and problem-solving, the 4Rs approach enriches conflict resolution instruction as well.

The 4Rs includes a parent component, 4Rs Family Connections, which consists of activities children do with their parents at home. Each activity sheet includes a summary of the book used in the unit, a related activity for the adult and child to do together, and suggestions for further activities related to the book.

Rigorous scientific research demonstrates that The 4Rs makes a significant difference for young people. A new gold-standard study by top researchers at New York University and Fordham University tracked the development of children in nine New York City elementary schools that implemented the program compared with the development of children in nine control schools. Findings from the first two years of the three-year study are now official: Compared with children in the control schools, children in the 4Rs schools were less hyperactive, less aggressive, and saw their social world as less hostile. They were happier and more likely to resolve interpersonal problems competently.

What's more, during the first year children judged to be at greatest behavioral risk by their teachers had better attendance than their counterparts in the control schools and made better academic progress as rated by teachers. By the second year, they were also doing better on standardized tests.

At the end of the first year, independent ("blind") observers assessed the quality of classroom climate in all third grade classrooms in the 18 schools using a research-based observational instrument called the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). These observations showed significantly higher levels of overall classroom quality among classrooms in the 4Rs schools compared to classrooms in the control schools at the end of the first year. Specifically, classrooms in 4Rs schools had significantly higher levels of emotional and instructional support compared to classrooms in control schools. Other research has shown a strong correlation between higher levels on the CLASS and more positive social and emotional development and higher academic achievement.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that The 4Rs Program is an evidence-based program that should be available to schools everywhere.

**For more information on The 4Rs Program, please contact Lillian Castro, Morningside Center's director of administration, at [LCastro@morningsidecenter.org](mailto:LCastro@morningsidecenter.org).**

**Visit our website at [www.morningsidecenter.org](http://www.morningsidecenter.org).**