

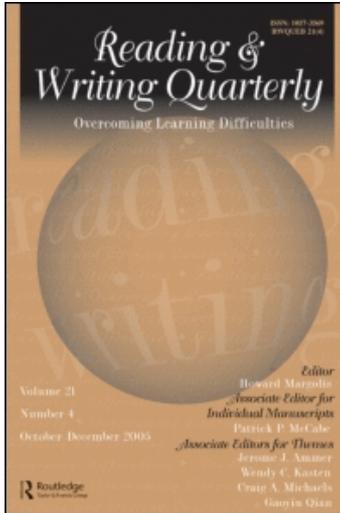
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### The *Responsive Classroom* Approach and Its Implications for Improving Reading and Writing

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# **The *Responsive Classroom* Approach and Its Implications for Improving Reading and Writing**

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*This article describes a social and emotional learning intervention, the Responsive Classroom<sup>®</sup> (RC) approach, which is designed to produce classroom environments conducive to learning. It summarizes a new body of research describing the efficacy of the RC approach. One component of the RC approach is the Morning Meeting. This article describes a set of Morning Meeting practices (and their rationale) that have been tailored toward promoting literacy skills. The goal of presenting the lesson plans for Morning Meeting practices is to help teachers see how literacy learning and socioemotional development can be intertwined creatively rather than viewed as 2 discrete sets of objectives requiring separate instructional practices. The new findings point to the contribution of the RC approach to improving reading and math test scores, enhancing social skills, and helping teachers to feel more positive and effective in the classroom.*

The explicit goal of American schools is to improve children's academic achievement. This goal, perhaps best embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Reading First legislation, presses schools to adopt a set of academically oriented priorities. As a result, principals focus on meeting school-wide achievement benchmarks, teachers direct their attention primarily toward children's academic outcomes, and instructional approaches emphasize scholastic competence. However, many families and some

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educators espouse a different view by taking the stance that schools should strive toward a more comprehensive set of learning objectives. Specifically, these families and educators demand that schools teach children social and emotional skills as well as improve their academic performance in reading and other areas. Caught between these two quite divergent goals, teachers need resources and support.

Ideally, children's academic achievement and socioemotional learning should be viewed as complementary objectives. A growing body of research from developmental and educational science points to the ways in which social and emotional skills lay the foundation for the development of academic learning. For example, children need to manage their emotions to sustain high levels of engagement in the classroom (Finn, Pannozzo, & Voekl, 1995; Izard, King, & Trentacosta, 2008). Likewise, children need to know how to interact with their peers in order to engage fully in socially interactive learning activities in school (Oortwijn, Boekaerts, Vedder, & Strijbos, 2008; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008). Furthermore, children perform better academically when teachers meet their social and emotional needs in the classroom (Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; McWilliam, Scarborough, & Kim, 2003). Such work points to the importance of classroom-based interventions that integrate social and academic learning. The *Responsive Classroom (RC)* approach is a very thoroughly developed approach with a well-established training infrastructure that shows promise for promoting both social and academic learning.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it summarizes a new body of research describing the efficacy of the *RC* approach. The new findings point to the contribution of the *RC* approach to improving reading and math test scores, enhancing social skills, and helping teachers to feel more positive and effective in the classroom. Second, it takes just one component of the *RC* approach, the Morning Meeting, and describes a set of Morning Meeting practices (and their rationale) that have been tailored toward the development of literacy skills in young children. The goal of presenting the lesson plans for the Morning Meeting practices is to help teachers see how literacy learning and socioemotional development can be creatively intertwined.

## WHAT IS *RC*?

The *RC* approach offers principles and practices designed to bolster children's academic, social, and emotional growth. The theoretical basis of using the *RC* approach as an intervention for school change rests on two premises. The first premise is that creating a caring classroom environment fosters an environment conducive to academic learning (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). The second is that emphasizing relationship

building and proactive approaches to discipline and behavior problems offers a healthy alternative to predominantly behavioral models of classroom management (Pianta, 1999). Although these premises are well grounded in developmental theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2007), it is difficult to translate theory to practice. The *RC* approach is designed to help teachers develop caring classroom environments and take proactive approaches to discipline through training them in principles and supporting practices.

The *RC* approach has seven essential principles to guide teachers' thinking and action. These principles are (a) an equal emphasis on the social and academic curricula; (b) a focus on *how* children learn as much as *what* they learn; (c) the view that social interaction facilitates cognitive growth; (d) an emphasis on cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control as critical social skills for children to learn; (e) a focus on knowing children individually, culturally, and developmentally; (f) an emphasis on knowing the families of children; and (g) the view that the working relationships among adults at the schools are critically important (Northeast Foundation for Children, 1997, 2007).

Specific *RC* practices emerge from these principles, including (a) Morning Meeting, a daily meeting to create a sense of classroom community with time for sharing, games, and playful intellectual activity; (b) Rules and Proactive Discipline, in which rules are established to prevent problems and in which consequences for problem behaviors follow logically from misdeeds, are developmentally and individually relevant to the child, and rely on a trusting and positive relationship between the teacher and the child for their effectiveness; and (c) a shift in teacher language, whereby teachers learn to comment descriptively on children's effort and learning processes, not only products, as well as to use "encouragement" rather than "praise" (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2007). These principles and practices are designed to create classroom environments conducive to learning. Thus, the majority of the practices emphasize social, emotional, and self-regulatory skills as immediate goals and academic achievement as a culminating objective.

In this article we further elaborate on the Morning Meeting practice. Class meetings, in one form or another, are already a common ritual in elementary classrooms. Thus, it is fairly easy to integrate them into most daily classroom routines. However, the typical classroom style of meetings does not support the *RC* principles or follow the *RC* practices. If *RC* practices are introduced to enhance typical all-class meetings, we feel that such meetings have the potential to offer richer academic, social, and emotional learning for children. Most germane to the present article, the *RC* Morning Meetings offer children a "double dose" of reading instruction and provide an optimal forum for supporting literacy learning in a fun, active, and interesting format.

## Evidentiary Basis for the *RC* Approach

Over the past 20 years, more than 60,000 teachers have been trained in the *RC* approach. Many teachers have been drawn to the approach because of the need to work with challenging classroom demands and because of its intuitive appeal, but only recently have studies been conducted to examine the evidentiary basis for the approach. Such research is critically important. Some aspects of the *RC* approach use sizeable portions of instructional time on a daily basis; for example, the implementation of the Morning Meeting can take 20 to 30 min daily. It seems imperative, then, for researchers to ask whether using the *RC* approach (and its accompanying practices) offers value above spending an extra 20 to 30 min focused on an existing reading or writing curriculum-based activity.

Research on the *RC* approach has been conducted in three waves. The first wave, represented by the *social skills studies* led by Stephen Elliott in the early 1990s, was based on a pre/post research design. The second wave, the *Social and Academic Learning Study*, led by Sara Rimm-Kaufman in the early 2000s, used quasi-experimental methods at six elementary schools. The third wave, the *Responsive Classroom Efficacy Study*, is currently under way (by Rimm-Kaufman and her team) and involves a randomized controlled trial of the *RC* approach in 24 elementary schools.

### SOCIAL SKILLS STUDIES

This first set of studies examined the school-wide implementation of *RC* and children's social skills (as measured by teachers, parents, and children themselves). Changes in children's social skills were examined for 193 children ranging from third to fifth grade at three schools: one newly implementing *RC*, one fully implementing *RC*, and one control. The population was representative of the U.S. population in 1990 and included 24% children from minority groups (primarily Black). In addition, 12% of students had special education status. Overall, a greater percentage of children at newly implementing schools showed gains in social skills as reported by both parents and teachers over a 1-year period (Elliott, 1993). Post hoc analysis of subgroups revealed that the special education students showed more improvement than their regular education peers. According to teacher and self-ratings, Black students indicated growth in the assessed areas; however, parent ratings did not reflect such changes.

For the purpose of further exploring the utility of *RC* with racially and ethnically diverse students, the intervention was replicated in a more racially diverse school (Elliott, 1995). The sample of 212 students ranging from pre-K to sixth grade included 41.2% Whites, 43.1% Blacks, and 10.4% Hispanics. Findings were comparable to those of the first study (Elliott, 1993). In addition, parent ratings of *RC* indicated that, regardless

of class or culture, parents found the approach either acceptable or highly acceptable. In a third study that spanned two school years, Elliott (1999) examined the social skills of 301 children (first grade through fifth grade) at schools in a high-poverty urban area. One school implemented the *RC* approach and one school served as a control. The district was composed mostly of poor children: 95% of the school using the *RC* approach had students who qualified for free or reduced lunch. The school was racially diverse: 24% White, 30% Black, 39% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian, and 4.5% unidentified. Teachers and parents reported on children's social skills at the beginning and end of the year, and achievement data were gathered at both time points. Findings showed gains in *RC* classrooms as opposed to control classrooms (effect sizes of  $d = .41$  for teacher-rated social skills and  $d = .34$  for student-rated social skills) as well as slightly improved academic achievement at the *RC* schools.

#### SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC LEARNING STUDY

In 2001, Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, LaParo, and Sawyer initiated a quasi-experimental, 3-year longitudinal study of the *RC* approach. Six schools (3 *RC* and 3 control) were studied over a 3-year period. The six schools were diverse with regard to ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In these schools, on average, 53.63% of students were ethnic minorities (*RC*: 50.56%, control: 56.70%) and 35.32% were eligible for free or reduced price lunch (*RC*: 34.46%, control: 36.17%). The study included teachers of kindergarten through Grade 5 and children enrolled in Grades 1 through 5. Children at *RC* and control schools showed approximately equivalent test scores at baseline.

The research team examined teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes toward teaching and the *RC* approach (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Teachers of students in kindergarten through Grade 3 at *RC* and control schools ( $n = 69$ ) completed questionnaires about teaching self-efficacy, attitudes toward teaching, and beliefs about discipline and behavior management and teaching practices. Teachers using more *RC* practices perceived themselves as more effective in relation to discipline, ability to create a positive school climate, and ability to influence decision making at their school. Teachers at *RC* schools held more positive attitudes toward teaching than did those at comparison schools. These findings were evident in the first year of *RC* implementation and accounted for between 10% to 55% of the variance in outcomes (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004).

In an examination of the *RC* approach and children's social and academic skills over 1 year (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007), teachers of children in Grades 1 through 4 at *RC* and control schools reported on the social and academic skills of children ( $n = 157$ ). One third of the sample had one or more family risk factors (e.g., single-parent homes, low income, limited English

proficiency, low maternal education). Teachers' use of *RC* practices contributed positively to teachers' perception of children's reading achievement, teachers' perception of closeness toward their students, children's assertiveness, and children's prosocial behavior. *RC* practices were associated negatively with children's anxious-fearful behavior. Gains were evident after children's previous years' performance and family risk were controlled; *RC* accounted for between 2% and 6% of the variance. The *RC* approach appeared to be equally important for children with high- versus low-risk family risk factors, suggesting that the *RC* approach contributed equally to student growth for children with varied family resources.

The research group examined the relation between teachers' use of *RC* and teacher practices and classroom quality (Decker, Skibbe, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2006). A total of 63 teachers (31 *RC* and 32 control teachers) were observed in their classrooms for 2 hr each. *RC* teachers were rated higher in both instructional and emotional support for learning (as measured by global codes in the Classroom Assessment Scoring System; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2007) and spent less time teaching basic skills and more time teaching analysis and inference (based on time sampling) than their counterparts who were not using *RC* practices. (Effect sizes ranged from  $d = .50-.74$ .) After researchers accounted for the percentage of poor children in the classroom, *RC* classrooms were rated higher in instructional support for learning than control teachers ( $d = .58$ ).

Further work asked about the extent to which the *RC* approach contributed to children's perceptions of the classroom, as well as the implications of children's perceptions for children's achievement and social skills over a 3-year period (Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). Self-perception, achievement, and social skill data were collected on 520 children during their third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade years. Teachers at the six schools reported on their use of the *RC* approach. Findings showed that teachers' use of *RC* practices contributed to better academic performance and social behavior as well as children's positive perception of school. Furthermore, children's perception of school mediated the relation between *RC* practices and teachers' ratings of children's social skills, but it did not mediate the relation between *RC* practices and children's achievement. In other words, children in *RC* classrooms held more positive perceptions toward schools, and those positive perceptions explained their improved social skills. This was not the case for academic achievement; that is, although children in *RC* classrooms held more positive perceptions of school, those perceptions themselves did not explain the link between teachers' use of *RC* practices and achievement. Instead, teachers' day-to-day *RC* practices appeared to bolster children's academic achievement.

Finally, to examine *RC* and children's academic achievement (Rimm-Kaufman, Fan, Chiu, & You, 2007), researchers compared test scores of children at *RC* versus control schools over 1-, 2-, and 3-year periods for

three different groups of children. The groups ranged in size from 381 to 502 children. Outcomes were children's achievement on the Degrees of Reading Power Test (Koslin, Koslin, Zeno, & Ivens, 1989) and the Math State-Level Tests. Data on treatment fidelity (using teacher report and observationally based measures) showed differences in the use of *RC* practices between intervention and control schools. Findings showed that, after poverty and previous years' test scores were controlled, the *RC* approach contributed to the gains in both reading and math. Effect sizes ranged from .16 to .21 for reading and .16 to .39 for math. It is important to note that the relation between the *RC* approach and test scores only became apparent after children had received 2 years of the approach.

It is useful to put the results of the *RC* approach in context within the field of education. One cannot make causal inferences about the impact of the *RC* approach because of the designs used. However, statements can be made about the likely contribution of the *RC* approach to student achievement for students from socioeconomically and ethnically diverse backgrounds. The effect sizes for the *RC* approach are small to moderate in size for improving children's achievement and moderate for improving classroom quality (Cohen, 1988). This is consistent with what is to be expected for interventions that emphasize both social and academic learning in children (Weissberg, 2005). Borman, Hewes, Overman, and Brown (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of comprehensive school reform models. The Child Development Project, an intervention closely resembling the *RC* approach, was included in the analysis and was shown to produce gains of .12 (with a 95% confidence interval of 0–.24). Thus, early research findings on the *RC* approach appear as strong or stronger than findings for other comparable interventions.

### Theoretical Basis for *RC*

We offer two explanations for why the *RC* approach may play an instrumental role in promoting literacy development. The first explanation is direct and suggests that teachers' use of *RC* practices improves the quality of the reading instruction that they can offer to children. The second explanation is indirect: The *RC* approach appears to enhance children's social and emotional development, which facilitates their ability to become and remain engaged in instruction.

To start, we raise an often-asked question: "What factors are most important for reading success?" Teachers typically cite the importance of teaching alphabet knowledge, print knowledge, and phonological awareness. Both theoretical and empirical work suggests that the *RC* approach may contribute to teachers' ability to teach these essential reading skills and that the approach may enhance the quality of classroom processes (Decker et al., 2006; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2007). High-quality, instructionally rich environments

are composed of a few critical ingredients: Teachers must provide rich instruction that fosters both basic skill and conceptual learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2007), teachers need to offer plentiful and specific feedback (Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993), and teachers need to support children's language development by introducing new terms and modeling the use of sophisticated language (Moats, 2002). The *RC* approach builds teachers' capacity in these critical areas and thus improves the instructional processes in their classrooms.

There is another often ignored set of contributing factors to literacy development—the socioemotional characteristics of the child. Language and alphabet skills are a necessary, but not sufficient, contributor to early reading success (McTigue, Washburn, & Liew, 2009). In fact, when the unique contributions of personality factors are directly compared with phonological awareness in predicting kindergarten students' reading success, recent evidence indicates that resilient and assertive personality traits (i.e., the ability to recover from and to persist upon meeting difficulties) are *more* important (Niemi & Poskiparta, 2002). Thus, Johnston (2005) proposed that the assessment of resilient personality factors be included in all literacy screenings, although this is currently not common practice. Furthermore, this argument suggests that interventions focused on improving children's ability to recover from mistakes and persist in challenging situations may promote their ability to read.

One explanation for the large role of socioemotional factors on reading achievement is that reading is an innately demanding (and unnatural) process that requires out-of-school practice and reinforcement. Therefore, throughout their journey to mastery, all students will reach points of frustration, and their reaction to that frustration will determine their success. At times of struggle within the learning process, a more assertive and optimistic child will likely persist through practice and continue to move through the learning cycle. In contrast, a less resilient student may not continue to persist and consequently may become an avoidant reader (Johnston, 2005). In addition, the social nature of much literacy instruction (i.e., literature circles) makes social skills important for successful learning. Overall, such findings that establish linkages between socioemotional learning and reading success reinforce our position that social, emotional, and academic learning should be coordinated in order for students to be successful readers (Greenberg et al., 2003).

### Rationale for “Literacy-Enriched” Morning Meetings

Following the belief that optimum reading instruction integrates elements of literacy and socioemotional learning, the Morning Meeting framework offers the flexibility to accomplish this goal. In the current climate of high-stakes achievement tests, activities designed for social development (such as class

meetings) can be criticized as not being an efficient use of school time. However, if integrated with the curriculum, the Morning Meeting can accomplish the goals of social development while also reviewing content material. A well-planned 20- to 30-min meeting can prove to be one of the most productive times of the day by reinforcing curricular goals while contributing to a positive management system that will aid in overall classroom efficiency.

The basic format of the *RC* Morning Meeting is (a) the greeting, (b) sharing (between students), (c) the group activity, (d) the Morning Message (Kriete, 2002). The *greeting* involves greeting every student by name daily and helps students practice the social norms of respectful greetings. The *sharing* time helps develop an atmosphere of considerate communication and allows students to practice speaking to the group in a low-stress setting. The *group activity* may be a short game or song that helps the class build a sense of class identity and encourages active participation. Finally, the *Morning Message*, written by the teacher, is read together and provides a transition to the academic day by reinforcing past lessons and arousing interest for upcoming lessons (Kriete, 2002). In contrast to the more traditional “calendar” activities (e.g., counting the days of school, recording the weather), such a flexible structure allows teachers to adapt the focus of the meetings throughout the school year, provide children with activities that are engaging and socially interactive, and provide new challenges as needed.

### Morning Meetings and Literacy Learning

The Morning Meeting has direct benefits for literacy learning. Although often overlooked, oral language development is the foundation for successful literacy development (Hart & Risley, 1995; Moats, 2002). Oral language is facilitated directly within the interactive structure of all four aspects of the meeting.

Indirectly, the Morning Meeting can be embedded with activities that promote specific reading skills and facilitate concept development without sacrificing the social components of the meeting. For example, a *greeting activity* in which students clap out the syllables in the name of the greeted student, fulfills a social goal by providing a sense of recognition and belonging for the greeted student while also reinforcing the phonological awareness skill of separating words into syllables. Content area knowledge can be reviewed during the *group activity time*, such as through *Beach Ball Vocabulary*, in which vocabulary words are written on a beach ball and students toss the ball around the circle and define the word that they touch when they catch the ball. This game fosters active engagement and builds cooperation while simultaneously reviewing important content words.

To model explicitly how we recommend infusing the Morning Meeting with literacy teaching, we created a set of model lessons for a first-grade class

to demonstrate how literacy could be integrated within a Morning Meeting framework. It is important to note that the lesson plans are not “RC plans” because RC is a principle-based approach, not a specific curriculum with pre-set lesson plans. Throughout these model meeting plans we worked to promote literacy learning in the areas of both decoding and comprehension development. For specific decoding skills, we included activities to practice rhyme, alliteration, segmentation by syllable, phonemic manipulation, and decoding nonsense words. To facilitate comprehension and vocabulary growth, we focused on a thematic unit and reviewed content from the previously read texts. For comprehension strategy development, the activities used two common graphic organizers to promote categorization and comparisons. Finally, to help build syntactical awareness, we included basic grammar activities about parts of speech.

These plans rely on the assumption that the teacher will be completing a read-aloud each day from a selected text that is part of a thematic unit (animals). In this manner, the meetings systematically reinforce learning from the previous days’ texts and are essential to promoting literacy learning in the meetings. For example, although trade books are a rich source of new vocabulary, a single exposure will not ensure the learning of newly introduced words. However, the Morning Meetings provide an ideal setting for practicing and reinforcing new words that are introduced by trade books (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). In short, Morning Meetings provide a natural opportunity for review while setting the stage for the upcoming day.

The texts that we selected are high-quality trade books by well-known children’s authors and include both fiction and nonfiction works: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin (1967); *Chickens Aren’t the Only Ones* by Ruth Heller (1999); *The Mitten* by Jan Brett (1989); *Look to the North: A Wolf Pup Diary* by Jean Craighead George (1998); and *Baby Beluga* by Raffi (1992).

### Target Audience for Literacy-Rich Morning Meetings

The specific lesson plans are designed to support beginning literacy skills appropriate for most first-grade classrooms. In order to reflect the vast range of literacy skills found within a first-grade class, the lessons cover a range of activities from the very basic “concepts of word” development through more advanced skills such as encouraging the use of descriptive language.

There is also a range of sophistication in terms of implementing the proposed activities. Clearly, some of these activities (e.g., Brown Bear Greeting) could be appropriate for the beginning of the year in a kindergarten or first-grade classroom. Other activities (e.g., Eggs or No Eggs? Class Sort) would be more appropriate for a Morning Meeting only if they had been used and modeled previously in class. As stated earlier, these lessons are not intended

to be an exhaustive list but to demonstrate possible links between Morning Meetings and literacy regardless of the specific reading programs or curricula used. Within the lesson plans, it is noted how the activity corresponds to the instructional domains outlined by the National Reading Panel (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

In addition, Morning Meetings are not limited to the primary years and can be used effectively in upper elementary classrooms as well, as is evidenced by previous research that included students through the sixth grade. Middle school students can participate in a modified form of a Morning Meeting in which the basic components remain constant but are adapted to integrate with the compartmentalized structure of a middle school day and to meet the needs of middle school students (Kriete, 2002). Resources for implementing Morning Meetings include [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org), *99 Activities and Greetings* by Correa-Connolly (2004), and *The Morning Meeting Book* by Kriete (2002).

## The Activities

Monday's plan is based on *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin (1967; see Table 1 for details). The phonological awareness practice occurs through the use of alliteration games featuring animals (the thematic unit). Alliteration is both practiced orally in the sharing and the activity portions and also linked to writing in the Morning Message (see Figure 1) to extend into phonics learning. In addition, the concept of categorization is reinforced.

Tuesday's plan is based on a nonfiction text written for young learners, *Chickens Aren't the Only Ones* by Ruth Heller (1999; see Table 2). Although Tuesday's meeting reinforces literacy in multiple ways, the main phonological awareness focus is on segmentation by syllable. To this end, students clap names by syllable in the greeting and then practice during the Morning Message by searching for multisyllabic words.

*The Mitten* by Jan Brett (1989) provides the basis for Wednesday's Morning Meeting (see Table 3). The literacy learning focuses on both phonemic manipulation and the grammatical concept of action verbs. Phonemic manipulation is reinforced through the Backward Name Greeting and a backward word search game within the Morning Message, both of which require students to decode backward "nonsense" words and transform them to their original correct form. In addition, Brett uses intriguing action verbs to describe the movements of each of the animal characters in her text. Based on the animal's movements, the concept of action verbs is reviewed and practiced orally and kinesthetically.

Thursday's plan is based on Jean Craighead George's (1998) book, *Look to the North: A Wolf Pup Diary* (see Table 4). Thursday's plan focuses on

**TABLE 1** Monday's Sample Lesson Plan for Integrating Literacy Within a Morning Meeting

| Component             | Activity   | Skills   |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Greeting              | <b>Brown Bear Greeting</b> (Kriete, 2002, p. 160)<br>The student who begins the greeting turns to his or her neighbor and the two students look at each other and smile while the group chants. For example, "Tamika, Tamika, what do you see?" Tamika then answers, "I see John smiling at me. Good morning." This continues until all of the students have been greeting individually.   | Prosody through rhythm and phrasing.<br>(fluency)<br>Review familiar literature  |
| Sharing (round robin) | <b>Alliterative Names</b><br>Students think of an animal that shares the first sound as their name and introduces themselves to the group as that animal, states the first sound, and one fact that they know about the animal. For example, <i>Theresa</i> : "My name is Teresa Tiger, which begins with a /t/. One thing that I know about tigers is that they have stripes."  | Beginning sound awareness through alliteration.<br>Segmentation of initial sound ("begins with a /t/"; phonological awareness)     |
| Activity              | <b>Stand Up!</b><br>After students have shared their name-animals, call out ways that animals can be classified (e.g., have fur). If the students' animal fits that description, they stand up. Then they go around the circle and restate their name. For example, <i>Teacher</i> : "I have stripes." Zoe Zebra and Teresa Tiger would both stand up and restate their names.   | Concept of categorization.<br>Activate background knowledge about animals (comprehension)<br>Alliteration (phonological awareness) |
| Morning Message       | <b>Examples and Non-Examples</b><br>After reading the Morning Message together, discuss the vocabulary word <i>observe</i> . Illustrate the link between <i>observe</i> and <i>observer</i> and <i>observant</i> . Have students share examples (or act out) what an "observant hiker" would look like and would be doing. Then challenge students to give examples of what a "non-observant hiker" would be doing on a nature walk. Explain that you want everyone to be "observant" so that you all can learn as much as possible on your walk. Inform the students that after the walk, you will ask them what they did to be observant of the animals. | Concept building<br>Vocabulary   |

descriptive language by considering the use of adjectives. To address comprehension development, the activity uses the strategy of compare/contrast to review the differences between puppy and adult wolves.

| <b>MORNING MESSAGE</b>   |                  |
|--|------------------|
| October 10   |                  |
| Welcome to All Who Wonder!   |                  |
| Today is a special day.  |                  |
| We will have a regular Tuesday morning <i>but</i> this afternoon we will take a <u>nature walk</u> ! We are learning about animals, so on our walk we are going to watch for them. You will need your science journals and a pencil to write down and draw what you see as we wander. Which animals do <i>you</i> think we will find in the woods? But even if we don't see animals, we can find signs that animals live there. What signs of animals (like tracks or nests) do you think that we may see too? |                  |
| Write down below, which animals we may observe ( <i>see</i> ) on our walk and which signs of animals we may see:   |                  |
| Animals  | Signs of Animals |
| Warmly,  |                  |
| Ms. Scott  |                  |

**FIGURE 1** Example of a Morning Meeting Message for use with a “W” word search.

Finally, Friday’s meeting is inspired by a catchy song that is written in the book *Baby Beluga* by Raffi (1992; see Table 5). Students practice rhyme through learning a new song and keeping track of the rhyming words. The letter patterns of rhyming words are reinforced while reading the Morning Message.

## CONCLUSION

Within the considerable time constraints of school schedules, teachers relentlessly grapple with the tension of teaching large amounts of content

**TABLE 2** Tuesday's Sample Lesson Plan for Integrating Literacy Within a Morning Meeting

| Component                | Activity   | Skills  |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Greeting                 | <b>Moving Name</b> (Correa-Connolly, 1994, p. 123)<br>Brainstorm simple motions to be used when counting out the syllables of a person's name (e.g., clapping, snapping fingers). Allow time for each student to choose one action. Have students stand in a circle. Individually, one student will call out the syllables of his or her name with the corresponding motion (e.g., Bianca would snap her fingers three times). The class returns the greeting by saying "Good Morning Bianca" and using the same motion when saying her name.  | Segmentation by syllable<br>(phonological awareness)  |
| Sharing<br>(round robin) | <b>If I Were an Animal . . .</b><br>Have students use the prompt to share a quality about themselves: If I were an animal I would be a [e.g., <i>dolphin</i> ] because [e.g., <i>I like to swim</i> ].   | Practicing complex sentences.<br>Review animal knowledge (comprehension)  |
| Activity                 | <b>Eggs or No Eggs? Class Sort</b> First review a list of the animals from the book <i>Chickens Aren't the Only Ones</i> and practice reading the animals' names. Give each student either a sticky note with the name of an animal or a picture of an animal. Then have students walk around and find their match (animal name with picture). With their match-partner, have the students decide whether the animal lays eggs (e.g., yes, a shark does). Then have the students complete a class T-chart of "Who Lays Eggs" by putting their sticky note on the correct side of the chart. Review the chart with the class and clear up any misconceptions. | Reading/reviewing animal names.<br>Concept development<br>Categorization strategy for comprehension (comprehension) |
| Morning Message          | <b>Syllable Search</b><br>Chorally read the news and announcements with one student pointing to the words as they are read. Next have students find words that have three syllables (e.g., <i>announcements</i> ). Have students come up and circle a word with three syllables and have the class clap it out together.   | Concept of word development.<br>Segmentation by syllable (phonological awareness)                                   |

while attending to children's emotional health and arising social issues of the classroom. This dual challenge of meeting children's social and emotional needs while achieving high academic objectives brings substantial stress to teachers. Nowhere is this challenge more evident than in early childhood classrooms. Adding to the challenge is the perception that

**TABLE 3** Wednesday's Sample Lesson Plan for Integrating Literacy Within a Morning Meeting

| Component         | Activity   | Skills   |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Greeting          | <b>Backward Name Greeting</b> (Kriete, 2002, p. 159)<br>Students write their first name backward by letters (not sounds) on a name tag (e.g., Ethan writes "Nathe"). Go around the circle and have students greet each other with their backward name. Allow other students to help sound out the new names.   | Decoding nonsense words (phonics)  |
| Sharing (partner) | <b>Action Verb Share</b><br>In preparation for the Mitten Activity, review with students what an action verb is. Have students describe and act out an action that they performed yesterday and share with a partner.  | Descriptive language.<br>Parts of speech (comprehension)   |
| Activity          | <b>Animal Action Match</b><br>From a prepared chart, review the ways in which the animals in <i>The Mitten</i> (Brett, 1989) moved (e.g., swoop, trot). Give each student a card with a movement/verb on it and ensure that at least two students will have each verb. Give time to make sure that each student can read his or her card and knows the action. On a signal, have the students safely get up and start silently acting out their word. By watching others (and not talking) have them find their partner(s). Once partners have found each other, they will sit down and hold up their card. The game can be repeated if time allows. | Descriptive language.<br>Parts of speech (verbs)<br>Vocabulary development/comprehension (comprehension) |
| Morning Message   | <b>Reading Backward and Forward</b><br>In the news and announcements write a few of the words backward (e.g., "Doog Morning"). Read the news aloud and pause at the backward words and have students decode them and then replace them with the correct word.  | Phonemic manipulation (phonological awareness)<br>Decoding nonsense words (phonics)                      |

enhancing young children's social skills competes with the academic objectives of school because of time limitations. In reality, ignoring students' social development in favor of purely academic instruction may hinder academic growth.

We advocate that the two goals—meeting children's social and academic goals—can be viewed as complementary. However, many teachers need help understanding the synthesis between these objectives. The *RC* approach offers an established set of principles and practices geared toward meeting both academic and social objectives of school. Unlike many other curricular approaches or social and emotional learning interventions, the *RC* approach

**TABLE 4** Thursday's Sample Lesson Plan for Integrating Literacy Within a Morning Meeting

| Component             | Activity  | Skills   |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Greeting              | <b>Adjective Greeting</b> (Kriete, 2002, p. 158)<br>Bring a list of adjectives to the circle that is organized by first letter (e.g., A—artistic, athletic). Review what an adjective is and have students, with partners, select (or think of) a positive adjective that begins with the first letter of their name. Have students introduce their partner to the group (e.g., “Hello, this is Fast Francis”).   | Alliteration, segmenting initial sound (phonological awareness)  |
| Sharing (interactive) | <b>“I Remember . . .” Share</b><br>Have selected students share one thing that they remembered and liked from the book <i>Look to the North</i> (George, 1998). After each shares, two students can pose questions and/or comments.   | Reviewing vocabulary (vocabulary)  |
| Activity              | <b>Compare/Contrast: Class Venn Diagram</b><br>The book teaches the life stages of a wolf. First review specific wolf activities on a chart so that everyone can practice reading the words. Write down the same activities on sticky notes and give one note to each pair. Have students consult with the partner and decide if their activity is a puppy activity, an adult activity, or both. Then have students come up to a Venn diagram drawn on the chart and place their sticky notes in the correct spot and share their wolf activity with the group. (Students should be familiar with the Venn diagram before doing this activity.) Review the chart at the end | Comprehension strategy: Compare/contrast with Venn diagram (comprehension)<br>Review vocabulary (vocabulary) |
| Morning Message       | <b>Adjective Hunt</b><br>Have the class chorally read the news and announcements while having one student point to each word with a pointer. After reading, have students find any describing words/adjectives that were in the day's letter (e.g., Dear <i>Eager</i> Students). Have students come up and highlight the adjectives.  | Concept of word<br>Reviewing adjectives (comprehension)  |

is not fragmented, making it easier for teachers to use in the classroom. Specifically, the *RC* approach is not a traditional curriculum. It overlies specific programs and curricula and therefore can be implemented in many settings. As illustrated in this article, the practice of Morning Meeting in

**TABLE 5** Friday's Sample Lesson Plan for Integrating Literacy Within a Morning Meeting

| Component                | Activity   | Skills  |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Greeting                 | <b>Book Character Greeting</b> (Kriete, 2002, p. 160)<br>Have students pick a favorite character from a book and write the character's name on a name tag. Have students greet each other by their character's name (e.g., "Good morning, Curious George")   | Increases book awareness/interest<br>Writing and reading names  |
| Sharing<br>(interactive) | <b>I Chose . . . Because . . .</b><br>Have selected students share why they chose their character. Review short and succinct rules about sharing and model for the students. (e.g., "I chose Ananse because he is smart and clever"). Class members pose questions and comments to the sharing students.   | Practicing complex sentences<br>Posing questions<br>Sharing opinions of literature<br>(comprehension) |
| Activity                 | <b>Singing</b><br>After reading the book <i>Baby Beluga</i> (Raffi, 1992) the previous day, show the students the book and explain that there is a corresponding song. Play a recording of the song and teach it to the class. After learning the song and singing it together, ask the class which rhyming words they hear. Write down the words that rhyme (e.g., <i>spout/out, play/day</i> ). Point out and highlight the letter patterns that make the rhyming sounds (e.g., <i>spout</i> and <i>out, play</i> and <i>day</i> ) | Rhythm for fluency (fluency)<br>Rhyme (phonological awareness)<br>Vowel patterns (phonics)            |
| Morning<br>Message       | <b>Rhyme Search</b><br>In the news and announcements include pairs of rhyming words throughout the letter. After reading the letter with the class, ask students who can find the rhyming words. Have students come up and circle the rhyming word pairs. Circle each pair in a different colored marker.  | Rhyme (phonological awareness)<br>Vocabulary<br>Concept building                                      |

particular can be well adapted to simultaneously address literacy goals and social learning goals.

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