

# An external evaluation of R time

Carried out by the Educational Psychology Service in Leicestershire during 2004/5

In response to the fact that over 150 primary schools in Leicestershire use R time, the Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service set out to evaluate the benefits of R time. We chose a sample of Leicestershire primary schools that were intending to introduce the programme at the start of the 2004 academic year. The main aim of the study was to measure the impact of R time on relationships, social inclusion and anti-bullying. Furthermore, we wished to assess the affect of R time on contentment within school and pupils sense of self-worth.

## **Methodology**

Prior to the introduction of R time in the 8 selected schools a questionnaire was administered to all Key Stage 2 classes. There were approximately 1140 participants who completed the questionnaire. The majority of questions were formatted so that the participant chose one of four possible graded answers: a lot, a bit, not really, not at all. There were also questions requiring a yes or no response. Three questions had added space to insert comments. The questions were identified as indicating one of five areas of social and emotional development: relationships, social inclusion, bullying, self-worth and contentment in school.

The same questionnaire was delivered on three separate occasions: prior to the introduction of R time (baseline), 3 months after introduction and 6 months after introduction. It was expected that all classes would have a minimum of one weekly R time session for the duration of the study. Percentages of the participants' responses at baseline, 3 months and 6 months were compiled and fed back to the participating schools. After the 6 month evaluation, the baseline and 6 month percentages were then collated.

### **Does R time have a positive impact on social Inclusion?**

Qualitative feedback from the pupil questionnaires showed the children had learned to be kinder to, trust and respect one another. Children reported that they learned that people have differences and they enjoyed working with a range of partners (opposite gender, different ability levels) that they would not normally choose to interact with. Teachers observed a 'gender togetherness' and increased tolerance and respect among pupils. Children showed an increase in empathy and positive attitude towards others. One Head teacher commented that the children were 'working across boundaries.'

### **Do children participating in R time enjoy it and recognise its value?**

Qualitative feedback from the children showed that the children found the R time activities enjoyable and stimulating. They particularly enjoyed the random pairing before each activity. Many commented that they would like to do R time more often and several stated that their school was a nicer place since the introduction of R time. The majority of teachers reported that children responded with enthusiasm to R time and that R time was compatible with the already existing school ethos.

### **How did the children manage and view Random Pairing in R time?**

Relationship building is aided by children learning to work confidently with people outside of their usual friendship groups which in turn makes them more tolerant of other people's differences. Qualitative feedback from pupils has shown overwhelming support for having the opportunity to work with children that they would not usually work with. Children commented that this gave them the opportunity to make new friends and get to know others better. Children felt that R time gave them the opportunity to improve their social skills, such as improving use of eye contact, working in teams, addressing people by name, and generally being more polite to others. Teaching staff reported an increase in social skills, manners, sharing and the children working more co-operatively in day-to-day classroom activities. They also felt that the children were more positive about

working with others in the class and some believed that the children in their school were more empathic as a result of R time.

### **Does R time promote increased feeling of self-worth?**

Qualitative comments from the children supported the high level of reported confidence the questionnaires measured. Children who self-described as 'quiet' or 'shy' reported greater confidence as a result of working in pairs. Comments from teaching staff similarly observed a boost in the confidence level of many of the pupils.

The findings from our study indicate that R time has a positive impact on promoting inclusion, improving relationships and raising awareness of bullying. Through random pairings R time encourages children to work outside of their friendships groups, develop new relationships and as a result promotes inclusion and supports anti-bullying strategies. By encouraging social interaction, the children experience an increase in both the quality and quantity of the friendships that they form.

### **Conclusion**

As an outcome of R time, children have a greater awareness of others, which translates into a greater respect and tolerance of individual differences. Reported self-worth remains high and relatively consistent throughout the study. Children previously described as 'quiet' or 'shy' are reported to develop a greater self-confidence and have opportunities to expand their social circles. R time appears to have had a positive effect on children's self-reported contentment in their school life and daily lessons.

If you require more information about this research please contact Caroline Trimmingham or Rob Osborn at:

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