

**FINAL REPORT**

1996-1998

**A MULTI-YEAR EVALUATION OF THE RESPONSIVE  
CLASSROOM<sup>®</sup> APPROACH: ITS EFFECTIVENESS AND  
ACCEPTABILITY IN PROMOTING SOCIAL AND  
ACADEMIC COMPETENCE**

**Prepared for:**

**Northeast Foundation for Children  
and  
Kensington Avenue Elementary School Staff**

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## Introduction

Teaching children to get along with others, to care about themselves, and to actively participate in learning are three of the most important outcomes of the schooling process. Yet children in many schools are not achieving these outcomes and, in many cases, educators are unprepared to create an instructional environment that facilitates these outcomes. As a consequence, many schools have become places where children feel threatened, unhappy, unsupported, and/or angry. These feelings usually do not lead to optimal learning conditions. Under these conditions, learning is negatively affected even for some of the most able students. The importance of this problem has been acknowledged for years in major reports on education, such as *Nation at Risk* (1983), and most recently by federal initiatives under educational reform agendas like *Goals 2000*. The development of socially competent students also has been a top concern echoed in surveys of parents, teachers, and students (Krumboltz, 1987), by educational consumers (Gallup, 1995, 1997), and by educational administrators (Berman, 1997).

The genesis of poor instructional environments and underachieving, poorly behaved students is complex and varies across individuals and schools/communities. Consequently, the solutions to improving learning, preventing or reducing inappropriate behavior, and currently facilitating the prosocial development of students require flexible, multifaceted, and pervasive interventions. *The Responsive Classroom*®, a multi-component instructional intervention that can be introduced on a classroom-wide and school-wide basis, has the qualities of an effective and acceptable intervention for many of the social-emotional and academically related problems exhibited by students today (Elliott, 1993, 1995).

## Overview and Purpose of the Project

The two-year project reported in this document is a longitudinal investigation of the implementation and effectiveness of *The Responsive Classroom* approach at Kensington Avenue Elementary School in Springfield, Massachusetts. The project was a collaborative effort among educators (Tim Babcock and Tom Rice) at the school, administrators/consultants from Northeast Foundation for Children (Jay Lord and Robert Wood), and university-based researchers (Stephen Elliott, James DiPerna, Christine Malecki, and Ann Marquart). Collectively, teachers, parents, and students who were exposed to *The Responsive Classroom* approach to instruction were studied primarily to determine the effects of the approach on (a) environments and (b) students' social and academic competence. These results have been evaluated via comparisons to a companion school in Springfield where *The Responsive Classroom* approach is not currently used.

In the early Fall of 1996, it was decided that a comprehensive evaluation study of the acceptability and the effectiveness of *The Responsive Classroom* approach as implemented at Kensington Avenue Elementary School (KAES) was desirable given the opportunity to examine the relationship between students' social behaviors and academic achievement via the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Academic Competence Valuation Scales. This evaluation project was designed to answer four questions:

1. *How do teachers use The Responsive Classroom approach in their classrooms over the course of a school year?*
2. *What effect is The Responsive Classroom approach having on Kensington students?*
3. *What differences in social skills exist among students from Kensington and a control or comparison school with a similar student population?*
4. *Is there a support system that exists in Kensington Avenue Elementary School that is different than in the comparison school?*

## Kensington Avenue Elementary School (KAES).

Kensington Avenue Elementary School is an urban, city-wide Chapter I school that serves over 400 students in grades K through 5. About 75% of the students come from a low socioeconomic level, live in subsidized multi-family housing, and have impoverished backgrounds. In 1996 when the project began, 95.4% of the students qualified for reduced or free lunches according to federal guidelines, making KAES the second highest poverty level school in the Springfield Public School District.

The school's mission statement reads, "We build a foundation for the future through teaching to the multiple intelligences and showing appreciation for cultural diversity and social acceptance. Here hopes and dreams begin, grow and come alive." The primary values that guide the operation of KAES include: Everyone does learn; Each child has unique talents and skills; Confidence and effort lead to success; Everyone needs opportunities that will allow them to excel; Respect for self, others, community, and society are essential for success; and Inclusive classrooms lead to a positive school climate.

In 1991, the school's student population began to change to a minority majority. Indicators of achievement, such as the Metropolitan Achievement Test, documented that 75% of the first-grade students were coming to school unprepared to learn and 25% were unable to master the skills necessary for second grade. These facts led the staff and principal to search for ways to better meet the needs of students. Consequently, several changes to the curriculum and instructional practices were explored and four innovations were implemented. These included an Arts Collaborative with the University of Massachusetts, Project Zero from Harvard University, a developmental literacy program called First Steps, and *The Responsive Classroom*. Collectively, these programs have been operating at KAES for the past couple of years. The underlying commonality among these programs is support for students' learning. This support is manifested in acceptance of individual differences, both socially and academically.

Of the four curricular and instructional innovations implemented, *The Responsive Classroom* approach, by design, has played the major role in facilitating the social knowledge and skills needed by teachers and students to create a caring, supportive community focused on learning.

## *The Responsive Classroom (RC) Approach*

*The Responsive Classroom* (Charney & Wood, 1981) is an instructional approach that integrates the teaching of academic skills and the teaching of social skills as part of everyday school life. *The Responsive Classroom* (RC) is comprised of six components labeled (a) morning meeting, (b) classroom organization, (c) rules and logical consequences, (d) guided discovery, (e) academic choice time, and (f) assessment and reporting.

The components of *The Responsive Classroom* approach have evolved and been refined through the combined efforts of practicing teachers and educational-developmental researchers. Morning Meeting (MM) begins a *Responsive Classroom* day with children greeting each other, sharing academic and social news, participating in motivating activities and focusing on one or more cognitive pieces of the day ahead. Children sit in a circle with their teacher building a sense of belonging, significance, and fun. Whether in kindergarten or sixth grade, MM sets the tone for the entire school day. Based on sound early childhood practices, MM has coalesced many familiar practices into a coherent and sequenced structure that maximizes the enhancement of communication skills for children. In RC classrooms, teachers pay particular attention to the developmental levels of children and match furniture, centers, routines and time factors accordingly. This practice has been a focal point in early childhood classrooms and is extended throughout the elementary grades in *The Responsive Classroom* approach. Rules and Logical Consequences, based on the works of Dreikurs, Glasser, and others, is a discipline approach specifically aimed at the creation of self-control in children to help strengthen their ability to do outstanding academic work and to get along in a humane and caring way with peers and adults. In RC classrooms, emphasis is placed on modeling, practice, and role playing expectations for behavior. Guided Discovery, based on the classroom work of Charney and Clayton, and the research of Piaget and Vygotsky, sets the stage for a wide range of academic activity. Guided Discovery takes children through a carefully planned introduction of potential use of knowledge and care for others and allows teachers to structure classrooms so that children can have a balance of teacher assigned work and work that they choose from an array of possibilities. Such choice allows students opportunities to practice independent and cooperative

“research” and study skills, to produce work to a timeline, and to represent their work to their peers. Finally, *The Responsive Classroom* encourages teachers to explore an array of alternative methods of assessment of children’s work and to combine these with more standard measures of achievement. The approach also supports reporting student progress to parents on a continuum rather than by isolated grades. RC teachers are expected to engage parents and students in goal setting at the beginning of each year, thus establishing meaningful communications and focus to education.

Teachers in more than 100 schools in the United States have been trained to implement *The Responsive Classroom*. Evaluation reports by Elliott (1993, 1995) from two school districts where the approach has been implemented with relatively high integrity in several schools and compared to schools where *The Responsive Classroom* was not operating indicated the following:

1. Students exposed to *The Responsive Classroom* approach over a significant time period generally were perceived to exhibit higher levels of social skills in their classroom than students with limited or no exposure to the approach. Cooperation and assertion behaviors of students, in particular, were influenced by *The Responsive Classroom*. In addition to increasing the level of prosocial behavior, students exposed to the entire *Responsive Classroom* approach were observed to exhibit significantly less problem behavior than their peers with limited exposure to the approach. These findings held up across racially diverse subsamples of students.
2. *The Responsive Classroom* approach when used regularly was found to be associated with significantly greater gains in students’ social and academic functioning than in students from comparison schools where no social problem-solving or social skills curriculum was operating.
3. *The Responsive Classroom* components of Morning Meeting and Cooperative Learning were found to be differentially effective. That is, Morning Meeting was associated with increases in social skills, whereas Cooperative Learning was most strongly associated with decreases in problem behaviors.
4. *The Responsive Classroom* components were associated with greater gains in behavior, on average, for students with educational handicaps than students without handicaps. Based on ratings of teachers and students, the curriculum also was associated with greater gains for African American students than a comparison group of Caucasian students.
5. Parents, regardless of socioeconomic level or racial/ethnic group membership, overwhelmingly rated *The Responsive Classroom* approach as “acceptable” or “highly acceptable.” Whether they had a child in an RC classroom or not, they consistently indicated they would like their child’s teacher to use the approach.

During the first year of this study, with a sample of 301 students, we learned that teachers’ rating of social skills and problem behaviors showed significantly greater growth in both improving social skills and reducing problem behaviors for students exposed regularly to *The Responsive Classroom* approach than students in a control school where *The Responsive Classroom* approach was not in use. Academic growth, as measured by the ITBS, also showed significant greater growth for the RC students. And regression analysis using Fall social behavior ratings and Spring achievement results provided evidence for the hypothesis that social skills function as academic enablers for students and thus appear to have a causal relationship to achievement test results.

## Summary of the Two Year Evaluation Study

Let's now focus on the combined results from the two separate years of data that we have collected and summarizes information from the two-phase evaluation model about the social behavior and academic functioning of students participating in classrooms where part or all of *The Responsive Classroom* approach was being used during the period September, 1996 to June, 1998. The first phase or Quantitative Phase of the study focused on outcome evidence concerning teachers' use of *The Responsive Classroom* approach, changes in students' social behavior, and students' academic achievement. The second phase or Qualitative Phase of the study integrated teachers' and students' responses to questionnaires concerning *The Responsive Classroom* approach.

### Method

#### Sample

The social and academic behavior of 301 students from 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades in two schools was assessed on two occasions during Year 1 and 163 students from the same grades during Year 2 (See **Tables 1-Y1 and 1-Y2**). In general, these samples can be further characterized as 54% female, 46% male and racially diverse (i.e., 24% Caucasian, 30% African American, 39% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian, and 4.5% unidentified racial/ethnic groups). All students participated voluntarily and with the consent of a parent or guardian. The sample is representative with regard to gender and racial make-up of Kensington Elementary, but due to a small sample of males at grades 3 through 5, it may be unrepresentative of the control school.

A subsample of 66 students with complete data participated in both Year 1 and Year 2 of the study, and thus provided a longitudinal cohort. Specifically, this longitudinal cohort consisted of 24 2<sup>nd</sup> graders (10 males, 14 females), 26 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (13 males, 13 females), and 16 5<sup>th</sup> graders (7 males, 9 females). Note that we "lost" 4<sup>th</sup> graders because in Year 2 a new state test was given in place of the ITBS, consequently the achievement test data that is central to this evaluation was not available for over 20 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

In addition to the student sample, 34 teachers, and 102 parents actively participated in the study by completing child-focused ratings scales and program-focused questionnaires. The sample of parents represented children in only the RC classrooms at KAES.

#### Evaluation Instruments

Six instruments primarily were used to evaluate students' social behavior and reactions to *The Responsive Classroom* approach: the Social Skills Rating System, the Academic Competence Evaluation Scale, *The Responsive Classroom* Usage Checklist, and *The Responsive Classroom* Questionnaires. Two additional instruments were completed only by students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades to gain insights into their self perceptions of their social and academic efficacy and to directly measure student achievement.

The Social Skills Rating System or SSRS (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) was used to assess students' social behavior. The SSRS is a multirater (teacher, parent, and student), nationally normed behavior rating scale that assesses the frequency of children's social skills. The SSRS-Teacher and SSRS-Parent versions also provide assessment data on problem behaviors, while the SSRS-Teacher provides ratings of students' academic competence. The SSRS-Student form requires a third-grade reading level and allows students to complete a self-assessment of their social skills. The SSRS provides scale scores for total Social Skills, total Problem Behaviors, and Academic Competence. Scores for each of these total scales have mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. High scores (e.g., >110) are desirable on the Social Skills and Academic Competence Scales, whereas low scores (e.g., <90) are desirable on the Problem Behaviors Scale. Both the Social Skills and Problem Behavior Scales are broken down into subscale that provide a more detailed characterization of social behaviors. The Social Skills subscales are Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-Control. Each of these subscales have 10

Table 1 – Y1

Descriptive Summary of Participating Students for 1996-97

		RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM School #1		NON-RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM School #2	
		Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
1 <sup>st</sup>	Male	39	25	6	6
	Female	39	35	9	8
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Male	32	31	3	3
	Female	27	23	5	5
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Male	29	26	7	7
	Female	33	27	8	8
4 <sup>th</sup>	Male	22	20	5	5
	Female	30	27	5	4
5 <sup>th</sup>	Male	1	0	0	0
	Female	1	1	0	0
Total	M + F	253	215	48	46

Note. Twelve additional students (9 males and 3 females) identified as receiving instructional services in a special education classroom also participated in this study, but were not included in data analysis due to sample size limitations. The sample was racially diverse: 39.5% Hispanic, 28.8% African American, 24.3% Caucasian, 2.6% Asian, and 4.8% unidentified. The racial make-up of the samples from both schools was very similar.

Table 1 – Y2

Descriptive Summary of Participating Students for 1997-98

		RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM School #1		NON-RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM School #2	
		Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
1 <sup>st</sup>	Male	20	18	4	5
	Female	24	21	5	5
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Male	9	7	4	2
	Female	19	13	5	4
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Male	14	9	1	1
	Female	12	11	4	5
4 <sup>th</sup>	Male	6	7	2	2
	Female	8	7	3	4
5 <sup>th</sup>	Male	8	8	1	1
	Female	9	12	5	5
Total	M + F	129	113	34	34

Note. The sample was racially diverse: 38.7% Hispanic, 32.5% African American, 24.5% Caucasian, 2.5% Asian, and 1.8% unidentified. The racial make-up of the samples from both schools was very similar.

items, so raw scores (ranging from 0 to 20) are directly comparable and transformation of subscale scores to standard scores is unnecessary. The Problem Behaviors Scale is comprised of three brief subscales: Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems, and Hyperactivity. Each of these subscales has 6 items and thus raw scores (ranging from 0 to 12) are directly comparable and are used to summarize ratings.

The Academic Competence Evaluation Scale or ACES (DiPerna & Elliott, 1997) is an 84-item teacher rating scale designed to measure the learner-controlled skills, attitudes, and behaviors which are related to teachers' judgments of academic performance. The ACES yields a total score and subscale scores for study skills, academic skills, and interpersonal skills. The ACES has been found to have high internal consistency and test-retest stability coefficients. It correlates highly with students' GPAs and teachers' ratings of academic functioning and was used in this study as a validity check on the ITBS scores and the SSRS Academic Competence subscale ratings.

The Responsive Classroom Usage Checklist or RC Checklist (Elliott, 1993) was designed as a teacher self-report form for documenting daily use of the various RC components (i.e., Morning Meeting, Role Playing, Problem Solving Class Meeting, Time-Out, Choice Time, and Guided Discovery) over a two-week period. This checklist yields a percentage of usage score for each of six RC components.

The Responsive Classroom Questionnaires or RC Questionnaires (Elliott, 1994) were designed to document teachers' and students' (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades) reactions to *The Responsive Classroom* approach to instruction and to gain insights into changes needed to facilitate the use of the RC approach. Each of the questionnaires has some items that require ratings as well as some open-ended questions concerning the most and least desirable aspects of the RC approach. There is a core of common items across all four versions of the questionnaires.

The additional instruments of importance to the evaluation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade subsample include the Student Self-Concept Scale (Gresham, Elliott, Fernandez, 1993) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Forms K & L). The ITBS Survey Battery was used to provide a reliable overview of the reading, language, and mathematics skills of elementary school students. The 30-minute Reading test is composed of vocabulary and reading comprehension sections that result in a combined score. The Language test measures five language skills: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and expression. The Mathematics test examines concepts, estimation, problem solving, and data interpretation and results in a single total score. The three tests are then combined to yield a Total Score, which is the most reliable indicator of a student's overall achievement. ITBS scores are normal curve equivalents (NCE) with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06. Like percentile rank scores, NCEs have a range of 1 to 99. The NCE, however, represents equal units, thus allowing for the computation of averages.

## Data Collection Procedures

A standard Preintervention-Postintervention design with a 6-month interlude was used as the primary framework for collecting and analyzing the evaluation data each year. Specifically, after selecting the sample of participating students in October teachers, parents, and students (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders only) completed the SSRS in November. The older students also completed the SSCS rating forms. The ITBS was administered by the school district in October and May for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders, but not for 4<sup>th</sup> graders during the second year of the study because they had to take a state achievement test in its place.

During the months of November, January, and April, teachers from the RC classrooms completed the RC usage Checklist, providing evidence about the implementation integrity of the RC approach. Once again in late May, teachers, parents, and students completed the SSRS; the older students also completed the SSCS for the second time. Finally, in May and early June, teachers and students (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders only) completed RC Questionnaires. **Table 2** provides a visual summary of the data collection instruments, time lines, and participants completing the evaluation instruments.

## Analyses of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The major independent variable examined in this evaluation study was Instructional Approach (2 levels: Responsive Classroom, Non-Responsive Classroom). The primary analytic techniques used to examine and compare the quantitative data were multivariate analyses of covariance, multiple regressions, effect size statistics, and Pearson correlations. Specifically, quantitative data were collected

and analyzed concerning (a) the prevalence and changes in fundamental social skills and problem behaviors across samples of children exposed to differing levels of the RC approach, (b) the relationship between students' social skills and the occurrence of problem behaviors, (c) the relationship between students' social skills and their academic competence, and (d) the influence of *The Responsive Classroom* approach on teachers' sense of instructional effectiveness and personal satisfaction. Qualitative data was collected and interpreted regarding teachers' and students' perceptions of *The Responsive Classroom* approach and students' social behavior.

Table 2

Summary of Data Collection Procedures

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>FALL</b>	<b>WINTER</b>	<b>SPRING</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	SSRS	RCUC ACES	SSRS RCQ
<b>Parents</b>	SSRS	----	SSRS
<b>Students*</b>	SSRS SSCS ITBS	----	SSRS SSCS RCQ ITBS

\*3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students only.

Note. SSRS = Social Skills Rating System; RCUC = Responsive Classroom Usage Checklist; RCQ = Responsive Classroom Questionnaires; ACES = Academic Competence Evaluation Scale; SSSS = Student Social Support Scale; ITBS = Iowa Test of Basic Skills

Table 3

Teachers' Average Usage (Percentage of Days Per Week) of *The Responsive Classroom* (RC) Components During Fall, Winter and Spring of 1996-98

<b>Classroom Components</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade (N=7)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade (N=9)</b>
Morning Meeting	98%	88%
Role Playing	40%	37%
Problem Solving Class Meeting	35%	36%
Time-Out	82%	74%
Academic Choice Time	55%	36%
Guided Discovery	25%	23%
<b>MEAN % of Days Per Week</b>	55.8%	49.0%

## Results and Discussions

### *Quantitative Phase*

The major results of this summative evaluation of *The Responsive Classroom* approach as implemented during 1996-98 are displayed in the accompanying data tables and figures. Each of these tables or figures is described and major findings highlighted.

The major concern of this phase of the evaluation study was the effect of *The Responsive Classroom* instructional components on the social and academic behaviors of students at KAES. Before one can make any conclusions about the effects of an instructional intervention, it should be demonstrated that the intervention was used with high integrity. That is, the intervention components were all used frequently as intended. **Table 3** provides the mean percentage of days teachers reported using one or more components of *The Responsive Classroom* approach during the two-year project. Given that approximately 100 days of school occurred each year between Time 1 data collection and Time 2, it is easy to translate the percentage of days into an estimated number of days each component of the RC was used. Several trends can be interpreted from the usage data in Table 3. First, on average early elementary teachers used the entire approach slightly more than 50% of the possible days, while upper elementary teachers used it slightly less than 50%. The difference between the usage trends for the lower and upper elementary teachers is significantly different. Second, as expected, the Morning Meeting was the most frequently used component of the approach by all teachers. Third, teachers at the early elementary level (grades 1 and 2) used portions of the curriculum more frequently than their teaching colleagues at the upper elementary level (grades 3 through 5), this is particularly true of the academic choice time component. In summary, it is clear students with reasonable attendance records at KAES were exposed to significant portions of *The Responsive Classroom* approach and their level of exposure was assumed to be far greater than that of peers in the comparison school where the teachers had not been trained to use the RC approach. Student responses to the RC Questionnaire also confirmed frequent use of the various instructional components of *The Responsive Classroom*. Thus, the evaluation can be considered a fair test of the differential impact of the RC approach on students' behavior.

**Tables 4-Y1** and **4-Y2** are the first tables documenting the mean (average) SSRS ratings at Time 1 and Time 2 by teachers, parents, and students for the students from the two instructional conditions or schools (i.e., RC vs. NRC). Readers should examine these tables by (a) comparing scores from a single category of rater for students within a given instructional condition from Fall to Spring, (b) comparing scores across instructional conditions within a given category of rater, and then (c) comparing across raters within an instructional condition. The following trends in the data are prevalent within each condition: (a) compared to the national standardization sample for the SSRS, teachers', parents', and students' ratings of social skills are in the mid-Average range, and (b) teachers, parents, and students from the RC instructional conditions reported positive changes in the average frequency of social skills from Fall to Spring, whereas teachers, parents, and students in the control condition reported virtually no change or a decrease in social skills over the course of the year.

It should be noted that previous research on the stability of SSRS scores with untreated (i.e., no instructional or behavioral interventions in place) samples of students have indicated only minimal changes ( $\pm 3$  points) over periods of 1 to 2 months. Thus, changes of the type and magnitude observed with this data cannot be accounted for by error or unreliable measurements alone. It is reasonable to conclude that exposure to *The Responsive Classroom* curriculum does influence elementary students' social behavior in measurable and practically meaningful ways.

From a statistical perspective, a series of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to test the magnitude of change in Social Skills, Problem Behavior, and Academic Competence scores for students. In the ANCOVA, the SSRS scores from the Fall were treated as covariates of the Spring scores, thus allowing for a test of differences between students' ratings in the RC and NRC classrooms without the error problems typically encountered with change scores. The results of the ANCOVA for the teachers' ratings of students indicated there were significant effects for the main effects of instructional approach ( $F = 17.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In summary, the effects of *The Responsive Classroom* approach on the social behavior of students were statistically examined and the major trend observed in the mean data

Table 4-Y1

SSRS Data Summary for Entire Sample of Students in Classes With and Without *The Responsive Classroom* (RC) Program During Year 1 (1996-97)

	RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM		NON-RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM	
	Fall 1996	Spring 1997	Fall 1996	Spring 1997
<b>TEACHER</b>				
Total SS	96 (17)	99 (17)	104 (13)	99 (12)
C	13 (5)	14 (4)	16 (4)	15 (4)
A	12 (5)	13 (4)	14 (3)	12 (3)
SC	14 (5)	15 (4)	15 (3)	14 (3)
Total PB	103 (16)	105 (15)	97 (11)	104 (14)
Ex	2 (3)	3 (3)	2 (2)	3 (3)
I	3 (3)	4 (3)	2 (2)	3 (3)
H	4 (3)	4 (3)	3 (3)	4 (3)
Total AC	91 (14)	91 (15)	104 (11)	101 (10)
<b>PARENT</b>				
Total SS	101 (17)	107 (13)	98 (15)	104 (15)
C	12 (14)	13 (3)	13 (4)	13 (3)
A	16 (3)	17 (2)	15 (4)	16 (2)
SC	12 (4)	13 (3)	12 (3)	13 (3)
R	13 (3)	14 (3)	13 (3)	14 (2)
Total PB	102 (16)	95 (12)	101 (17)	99 (16)
Ex	4 (3)	4 (2)	4 (3)	4 (2)
I	4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (3)	4 (2)
H	4 (3)	4 (2)	4 (3)	4 (3)
<b>STUDENT</b>				
Total SS	107 (16)	108 (17)	106 (17)	106 (19)
C	15 (3)	15 (3)	15 (3)	15 (3)
A	14 (3)	14 (3)	14 (3)	14 (3)
SC	12 (3)	13 (4)	12 (4)	12 (4)
E	16 (3)	16 (3)	16 (4)	17 (3)

Note. The total scores for Social Skills (SS), Problem Behaviors (PB), and Academic Competence (AC) scales are in standard score form (M=100, SD=15), whereas the subscales for these scales are in raw score form. These subscores have a M=10, SD=3, C = Cooperation, A = Assertion, SC = Self Control, Ex = Externalizing, I = Internalizing, and H = Hyperactive, E = Empathy, R = Responsibility. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 4-Y2

SSRS Data Summary for Entire Sample of Students in Classes With and Without *The Responsive Classroom* (RC) Program During Year 2 (1997-98)

	RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM		NON-RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM	
	Fall 1997	Spring 1998	Fall 1997	Spring 1998
<b>TEACHER</b>				
Total SS	97 (15)	102 (19)	107 (13)	108 (12)
C	14 (4)	14 (5)	17 (3)	16 (4)
A	12 (4)	13 (5)	13 (4)	15 (3)
SC	14 (5)	14 (5)	16 (3)	16 (3)
Total PB	103 (13)	103 (13)	93 (9)	93 (9)
Ex	2 (3)	3 (3)	1 (1)	1 (2)
I	3 (3)	3 (2)	3 (2)	2 (2)
H	4 (3)	4 (3)	2 (2)	2 (2)
Total AC	92 (14)	92 (14)	102 (8)	104 (11)
<b>PARENT</b>				
Total SS	96 (18)	100 (14)	99 (17)	95 (15)
C	12 (3)	12 (3)	12 (3)	11 (4)
A	15 (3)	15 (3)	16 (3)	15 (3)
SC	12 (4)	13 (4)	12 (3)	11 (3)
R	13 (4)	13 (4)	14 (3)	13 (3)
Total PB	102 (14)	101 (14)	99 (13)	96 (13)
Ex	4 (3)	4 (3)	4 (2)	4 (2)
I	4 (3)	4 (2)	4 (2)	3 (2)
H	5 (3)	4 (3)	4 (3)	4 (3)
<b>STUDENT</b>				
Total SS	108 (17)	111 (15)	111 (17)	101 (13)
C	15 (3)	16 (3)	15 (3)	14 (3)
A	14 (3)	15 (2)	15 (3)	12 (2)
SC	13 (4)	14 (3)	13 (4)	11 (2)
E	16 (3)	15 (2)	17 (3)	15 (3)

Note. The total scores for Social Skills (SS), Problem Behaviors (PB), and Academic Competence (AC) scales are in standard score form (M=100, SD=15), whereas the subscales for these scales are in raw score form. These subscores have a M=10, SD=3, C = Cooperation, A = Assertion, SC = Self Control, Ex = Externalizing, I = Internalizing, and H = Hyperactive, E = Empathy, R = Responsibility. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

was determined to be significant at a level very unlikely to occur by chance alone. Thus, the different results between the RC and NRC groups of students is very likely due to the difference in instructional activities included in *The Responsive Classroom* approach.

Another method of examining the effect of the RC approach on the ratings of students' behavior (when compared to non-RC students) is to use an effect size statistic. Effect sizes are the result of subtracting the mean rating of the nonRC students from the mean rating of the RC students and dividing by the standard deviation of the nonRC students. Effect sizes of .20 to .39 are considered small, .40 to .80 are considered moderate, effect sizes >.80 are considered large (Cohen, 1977). An effect size of 1.0 means that the treatment group outperformed the untreated group by 1 standard deviation. This practically translates to the fact that the treated group did better than 34% of the untreated group. The mean effect sizes for the RC approach across the two years are as follows:

Teacher rated Social Skills = .41  
 Parent rated Social Skills = .07  
 Student rated Social Skills = .34

For many readers, statistical analyses do not provide the most meaningful way to communicate evaluation results. A more practical metric of the impact of an instructional intervention often is data on the percentage of individuals who had (a) improved behavior ratings, (b) essentially no change in behavior ratings, and (c) poorer behavior ratings. With this in mind, Table 5 was created. **Table 5** effectively provides information on the distribution of individuals with change scores on the SSRS of +5 points or more, -5 points or more, or between  $\pm 5$  points. As displayed in this table, teachers' parents', and students' ratings result in categorizing over 36.5% of the children in RC classrooms as showing "Noticeable Improvement" in social skills. Comparable results for students in NRC classrooms suggest 25% of the students showed "Noticeable Improvement" in social skills. Perhaps as important as increases in social skills, teachers in the RC instructional condition rated 31% of their students as exhibiting "Noticeable Improvement" in Problem Behaviors, whereas in the NRC instructional condition characterized 13% of their students as decreasing problem behaviors. When examining the distributions of students with significant changes in their academic competencies, teachers in both schools reported approximately 23% of their students showing noticeable improvement.

A comparison of the parents' and students' ratings suggest those exposed to the RC approach observed significantly greater percentages of students improve their social skills than students in the control school. Note that 60% of the students in the control school, compared to 37% from Kensington Elementary, rated themselves as decreasing the frequency with which they exhibited prosocial behavior. This does not necessarily mean these students in the control school are less socially skilled, but it suggests their school environment does not encourage or reinforce the display of social skills as often as the school environment at Kensington Elementary School.

Table 5

Mean Percentage of Students During Years 1 and 2 Evidencing Noticeable Changes in Social and Academic Behaviors

	Poorer Behavior	Essentially No Change in Behavior	Improved Behavior
<b>RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS</b>			
<b>Teacher</b>			
Social Skills	25%	38.5%	36.5%
Prob. Behaviors	29.5%	40%	31%
Academic Comp	25.5%	50.5%	24%
<b>Parent</b>			
Social Skills	34%	38%	28%
Prob. Behaviors	24.5%	54.5%	22%
<b>Student</b>			
Social Skills	37%	20.5%	42.5%
<b>NON-RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS</b>			
<b>Teacher</b>			
Social Skills	37%	36.5%	26.5%
Prob. Behaviors	36%	51%	13%
Academic Comp.	22.5%	58%	19.5%
<b>Parent</b>			
Social Skills	43%	30.5%	26.5%
Prob. Behaviors	15.5%	60.5%	24%
<b>Student</b>			
Social Skills	41.5%	39.5%	19%

Note. A change of +5 or more rating points defined a noticeable and reliable improvement in behavior, whereas a change of -5 or more rating defined a noticeable and reliable decrement in behavior. Change scores less than ±5 rating points characterized essentially no change in behavior.

**Table 6** documents the ITBS mean scores for students in both RC and NRC classrooms during the two years of the study. [Please note that the comparison school's scores were provided as GE or grade equivalents rather than as NCEs during Year 2 of the study. Also note that the comparison school sample was extremely small during Y2.] Over the course of the two years of the study, more than 57% of the students at KAES improved their ITBS scores by more than ½ a standard deviation (i.e., 10 points), compared to the NRC school where only 20% of the students assessed gained 10 or more points on the ITBS. When the cohort of RC students who participated in both years of the study were examined, we found that of the 31 students who took the ITBS four times, 20 improved by ½ standard deviation or more and none did worse over time. In fact, a repeated measures MANOVA designed to test the differences between these students ITBS scores at Time 1 (Fall 96) to Time 4 (Spring 98) indicated a significant ( $p < .0001$ ; that is, 1 change in 10,000) multivariate  $F$  using the Wilks' lamda method. Follow-up univariate analyses indicated the effects were due to changes in all three achievement areas: reading, language, and mathematics. Visual analysis of the mean data for the comparison school clearly indicates that few students could have made such gains because the mean NCE scores for Time 1 and Time 4 are nearly identical. In fact, the multivariate  $F$  for this subgroup of students from the comparison school was not significant.

Table 6

ITBS Means and Standard Deviations for Students During Years 1 and 2

		Responsive Classroom		Non-Responsive Classroom	
		Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 5<sup>th</sup> GRADES</b>					
<b>ITBS Total</b>	<b>Y1</b>	34.71 (16)	56.37 (17)	42.23 (18)	47.13 (20)
<b>ITBS Total</b>	<b>Y2</b>	42.20 (18)	49.14 (20)	Missing	Missing
<b>Math</b>	<b>Y1</b>	36.39 (17)	58.41 (19)	48.54 (21)	51.35 (17)
<b>Math</b>	<b>Y2</b>	40.21 (19)	48.51 (19)	Missing	Missing
<b>Language</b>	<b>Y1</b>	36.46 (15)	59.44 (17)	42.67 (18)	46.83 (22)
<b>Language</b>	<b>Y2</b>	44.43 (17)	50.98 (25)	Missing	Missing
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Y1</b>	37.40 (18)	47.81 (19)	46.72 (18)	47.04 (20)
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Y2</b>	44.04 (18)	47.60 (21)	Missing	Missing

Note. The ITBS scores are normal curve equivalents (NCEs) and have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06. Standard deviations are included in parentheses and rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Table 7** provides evidence about the relationship between the students' Social Skills, Problem Behaviors, and Academic Competence scores for students in an RC classroom. **Table 8** provides similar correlations for students in the NRC classrooms in the comparison school. Recall that a coefficient of correlation ( $r$ ) is a single number ranging between +1.00 and -1.00 that indicates to what extent two things are related, to what extent variations in one behavior or rating go with variations in another behavior or rating. Correlations ranging between .00 and  $\pm .29$  are considered low, correlations ranging between  $\pm .30$  and  $\pm .59$  are considered moderate, and correlations ranging between  $\pm .60$  and  $\pm 1.00$  are considered high. Tables 7 and 8 provide Pearson correlations among the three SSRS total scale scores

(i.e., Social Skills and Problem Behaviors, Social Skills and Academic Competence, and Problem Behaviors and Academic Competence) of students as rated by teachers, parents, and students themselves. Based on past research, the expectation was for moderate to high positive correlations between teachers' ratings of Social Skills and Academic Competence and high negative correlations between their ratings of Social Skills and Problem Behaviors. The  $r$  values in the table, both those representing Time 1 and Time 2, are equal to or larger than the same correlations for the SSRS's national standardization sample. As evidenced by the  $r$  values, the expected relationships between teachers' SSRS ratings were observed when all students in the sample were examined. The relationships between parents' ratings and students' ratings to ITBS scores 2 were in several cases weak.

The correlations in Table 7 are representative of those found with the cohort of RC students who participated in both Years 1 and 2. Given the high degree of similarity in the strength and pattern of relationships, a separate table for the longitudinal cohort is not provided.

In addition to correlations revealing information about relationships, regression analyses can provide information about the relationships among variables. A regression analysis estimates the linear relationship between a targeted variable (i.e., academic achievement) and one of more independent variables (i.e., social skills, problem behaviors, etc.). Specifically, a regression determines the amount of the total observed variability in the target or dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables. In other words, we answered the question how much variability in academic achievement can be accounted for by social skills and problem behaviors.

Regression analyses can be useful to investigate causal or predictive relationships among variables across time. After analyzing data from the fall and spring together, we can explore these predictive relationships among the variables. For example, how do social skills in the November affect achievement in the May?

Figure 1 tells the story about the relationships (via regression coefficients) among the key variables in this study. A regression coefficient indicates on a scale from  $-1$  to  $1$  the degree and direction of linear relationships between two variables (e.g., social skills ratings and achievement test score) when the effects of one or more other variables (e.g., problem behavior ratings or academic competence) have been removed from the former two variables. Specifically, in Figure 1 the relationships among social skills, problem behaviors, academic competence, and ITBS total score for students at KAES for both Year 1 and 2 are illustrated during the fall or at Time 1 (top portion of figure), during the spring or at Time 2 (middle portion of figure), and finally from the fall to the spring (bottom portion of the figure). As indicated in each of these three models (a) multiple regression analyses revealed that a significant amount of the variance in teacher ratings of academic competence was accounted for by teacher ratings of student social skills, (b) a significant amount of the variance of ITBS total scores was accounted for by both teacher ratings of student social skills and academic competence, and (c) ratings of problem behaviors have a nonsignificant relationship with ITBS total scores. The last model where Time 1 behavior data are used to predict Time 2 ITBS scores provides evidence of a casual relationship. Thus, it appears reasonable to conclude that students with strong social skills will more likely exhibit good to excellent achievement scores on tests such as the ITBS. This same analysis can not be confidently conducted for the longitudinal cohort due to the rather small sample of students.

Table 7

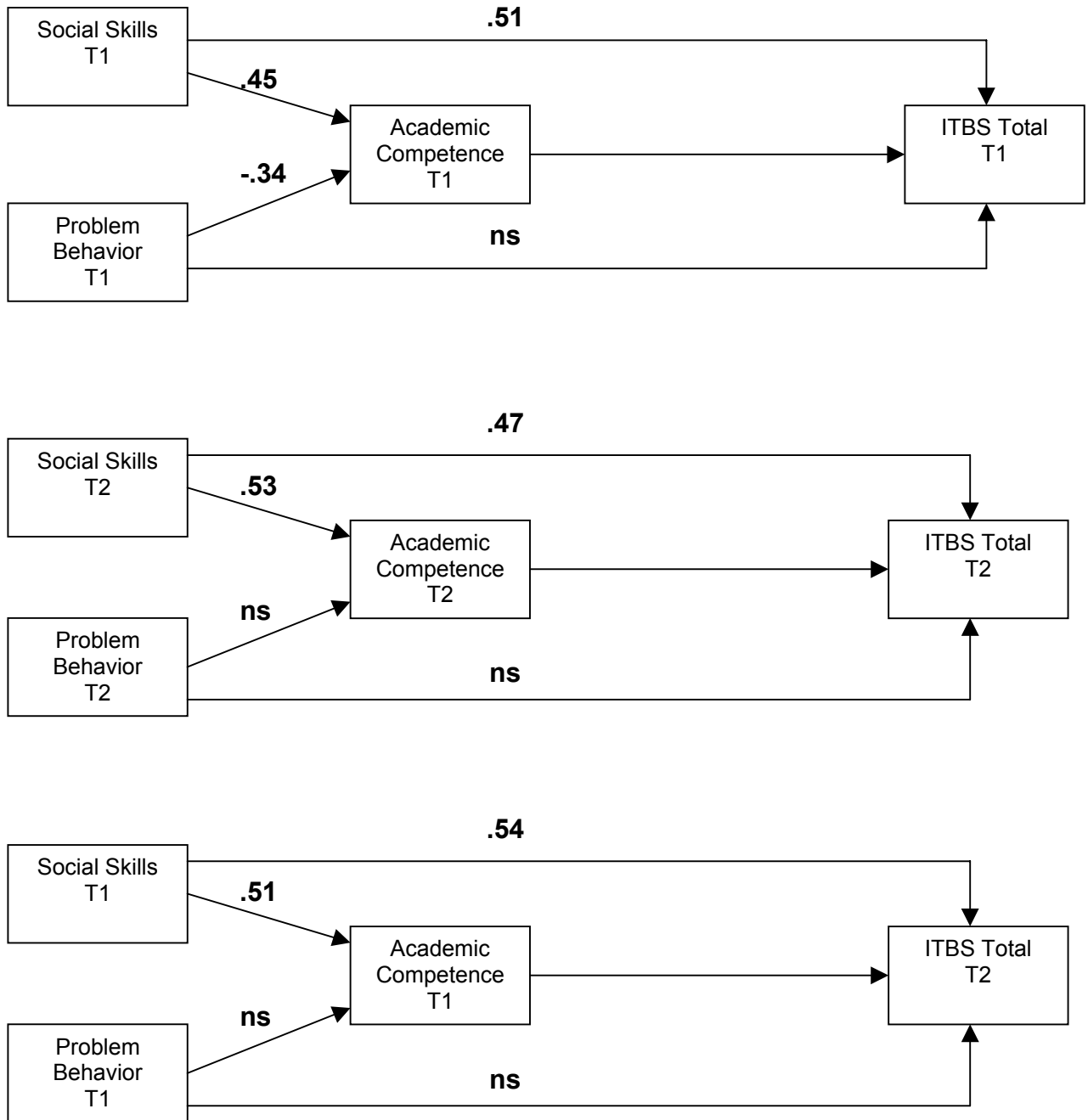
Correlations Among Ratings of Social Skills, Problem Behaviors, and Academic Competence at Time 1 and Time 2 for Students During Years 1 and 2 in Responsive Classrooms.

	Social Skills	Problem Behavior	Academic Comp.	ITBS Total	ITBS Math	ITBS Lang	ITBS Reading
<b>TEACHER</b>							
Social Skills	1.0 <b>1.0</b>	-.74** <b>-.75**</b>	.59** <b>.51**</b>	.55** <b>.40*</b>	.46** <b>.34*</b>	.57** <b>.26</b>	.50** <b>.40*</b>
Problem Behaviors		1.0 <b>1.0</b>	-.46** <b>-.46**</b>	-.40** <b>-.38**</b>	-.41** <b>-.43**</b>	-.34* <b>-.40*</b>	-.32* <b>-.17</b>
Academic Comp.			1.0 <b>1.0</b>	.77** <b>.79**</b>	.60** <b>.52**</b>	.66 <b>.70**</b>	.60** <b>.74**</b>
<b>PARENT</b>							
Social Skills	1.0 <b>1.0</b>	-.51** <b>-.64**</b>	.24 <b>.18</b>	.31 <b>-.24</b>	.16 <b>.42*</b>	.28 <b>.23</b>	.24 <b>.40</b>
Problem Behaviors		1.0 <b>1.0</b>	-.27 <b>-.39</b>	.12 <b>.05</b>	-.11 <b>-.10</b>	-.24 <b>-.34</b>	-.10 <b>-.09</b>
<b>STUDENT</b>							
Social Skills	1.0 <b>1.0</b>	-.54** <b>-.39**</b>	.35** <b>.40**</b>	.17 <b>.10</b>	.15 <b>.03</b>	.15 <b>.11</b>	.12 <b>.21</b>

Note. Based on the SSRS standardization data, you expect the correlations between Social Skills and Problem Behaviors for teacher ratings would be -.75 and between Social Skills and Academic Competence .68. The correlation between Problem Behaviors and Academic Competence should be approximately -.50. The correlations in regular typeface are for Time 1 and those in **bold typeface** are for Time 2. \*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .001$ .

Figure 1

**For all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>**



## Qualitative Phase

This phase of the study was conducted concurrently with the collection of the rating scale data in May and June in only the RC classrooms. Teachers and students respectively completed questionnaires designed to assess their perceptions of children's social behavior and the use of *The Responsive Classroom* approach to instruction. A summary of each of the respondents' reactions follows.

### Teachers' Reactions

Thirty-four teachers completed the same 11-item questionnaire, thus allowing for direct comparisons for their reactions. **Figure 2** provides a summary of the frequencies of teachers' responses. The first section of six items was entitled "About My Class This Year." On item #3, which read "My students' interpersonal or social skills overall this school year \_\_\_\_\_" the RC teachers overwhelmingly endorsed the response "Improved Significantly." These global responses are very consistent with the actual SSRS summary data reviewed in the previous section of this report. On item #4, which read "My students' overall achievement level this year has been \_\_\_\_\_" the RC teachers consistently selected the terms "Good" or "Very Good" to complete the item. On item #5, which read "My students' reactions to school this year has been \_\_\_\_\_" the RC teachers overwhelmingly endorsed "Very Positive" as the best characterization.

The second section of the teacher questionnaire was titled "Reactions to *The Responsive Classroom*," which was comprised of five items requiring ratings and five open-ended items. On item #8, which asked "The best way to characterize my reaction to *The Responsive Classroom* would be \_\_\_\_\_," the RC teachers overwhelmingly endorsed "Strongly Like It." On item #9, which stated "Based on my understanding of *The Responsive Classroom* program, I believe the effectiveness of this approach for improving my students' social behavior would be \_\_\_\_\_," 59% of the RC teachers thought it would be "Very Effective" while just over 20% thought it would be "Effective." On item #10, which stated "My interest in using *The Responsive Classroom* approach can best be characterized as \_\_\_\_\_," nearly 57% of the RC teachers selected "Very High" as the best way to complete the item. With regard to the perceived difficulty of implementing the RC approach (i.e., item #11), the RC teachers' selections varied widely with 37.83% endorsing "Difficult" and 38.6% endorsing "Easy."

When asked the aspect of the RC approach that students liked most, teachers in the RC group most frequently indicated "Academic Choice Time" or "Morning Meeting." When asked the aspect of the approach that students liked least, "Rules and Logical Consequences" or a blank space were the most frequently offered responses from the teachers in the RC group. No response or a blank space was the most frequent response of the NRC teachers to the same question.

Figure 2

Summary of Teachers' Responses to the RC Questionnaire (page 1 of 2)

<b>TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE</b>					
<u>Responsive Classroom Evaluation Project</u>					
Spring 1997 + 1998					
<hr/>					
<u>About My Class This Year</u>		(Circle <u>one</u> answer for each question)			
<b>1. My students' interpersonal or social skills with peers in general are</b>					
<i>Very Poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Exceptional</i>	
0%	17.35%	37.83%	44.62%	0%	<b>Mean 3.28</b>
<b>2. My students' abilities to solve problems with other people in general are</b>					
<i>Very Poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Exceptional</i>	
0%	17.35%	64.6%	18.05%	0%	<b>Mean 3.01</b>
<b>3. My students' interpersonal or social skills overall this school year</b>					
<i>Did Not Improve</i>		<i>Improved Slightly</i>		<i>Improved Significantly</i>	
0%		40.95%		59.05%	<b>Mean 2.60</b>
<b>4. My students' overall achievement level this year has been</b>					
<i>Very Poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Exceptional</i>	
0%	0%	47.20%	49.68%	3.12%	<b>Mean 3.56</b>
<b>5. My students' reactions to school this year have been</b>					
<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Slightly Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>	
0%	5.55%	0%	18.05%	76.40	<b>Mean 4.66</b>
<b>6. Parental involvement in my class this year could be characterized as</b>					
<i>Very Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very High</i>	
27.43%	52.1%	20.48%	0%	0%	<b>Mean 1.93</b>

Figure 2 continued

Summary of Teachers' Responses to the RC Questionnaire (page 2 of 2)

<b>TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE</b>					
<u>Responsive Classroom Evaluation Project</u>					
Spring 1997 + 1998					
<hr/>					
<u>Reactions to <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> Program</u>					
<b>7. Before receiving this survey, had you heard anything about <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> program?</b>					
(check) 0% No    0% Maybe    100% Yes					
<b>8. Based on my understanding of <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> program, the best way to characterize my reaction to it would be</b>					
<i>Strongly Dislike It</i>	<i>Slightly Dislike It</i>	<i>Slightly Like It</i>	<i>Strongly Like It</i>		
0%	11.8%	17.35%	70.85%		Mean 3.60
<b>9. Based on my understanding of <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> program, I believe the effectiveness of this program for improving my students' social behavior would be</b>					
<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>A Little Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>		
8.68%	11.8%	20.48%	59.05%		Mean 3.21
<b>10. My interest in using <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> program can best be characterized as</b>					
<i>Very Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very High</i>	
8.68%	0%	18.05%	16.65%	56.58	Mean 4.13
<b>11. Most teachers would find implementing the RC program</b>					
<i>Very Easy</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Very Difficult</i>	<i>I'm Unsure</i>	
3.12%	38.6%	37.83%	0%	22.9%	Mean 3.41
<hr/>					
Data based on teachers' ratings from grades 1 through 5 at Kensington Elementary over two years of study.					

## Students' Reactions

One hundred and seventy-one students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms where the RC approach was in use responded to a 9-item questionnaire about the RC approach. A summary of the frequencies of students' responses to the seven rating items is presented as **Figure 3**. In brief, students indicated on average that (1) "Getting along with classmates was talked about in class daily or very often," (2) "Spending time in class to practice social skills and ways to solve problems with others is very important," (3) "Morning Meetings are usually very useful," (4) "Chances to make personal choices about learning and working the classroom are important or very important," and (5) "Classroom rules and consequences for not following rules in my classroom are very clear."

When asked to indicate "The best way to describe how I feel about *The Responsive Classroom*" the students in the RC classroom consistently characterized their feelings as "Very Good" or "Good." On the final rating item, students were asked to complete the following statement: "This year my skills for getting along with others \_\_\_\_\_." Students' responses varied, 3.85% indicated "Got worse," 21.6% selected "Did Not Change Much," 28.2% selected "Improved," and 46.5% selected "Improved A Lot."

The students were given two open-ended questions. The first question asked students to identify "The thing I **liked most** about the Morning Meetings is \_\_\_\_\_." For purposes of this summary three responses were most frequently given. These were: "Sharing," "Greeting friends," and "Activities." The second question asked "The thing I **like least** about Morning Meeting is \_\_\_\_\_." Students gave a wide range of responses many of which indicated they "Didn't like the meetings to end" rather than pick out a negative aspect of the meetings themselves. Several students also indicated they didn't like it when "Children don't listen" or when "People try to insult, put down and irritate people."

Of the 171 students who responded to the RC Questionnaire, 42 were part of the longitudinal cohort. The mean responses for these 42 students were slightly more positive than those for the entire sample at grades 3, 4 or 5 who only participated for one year. The percentages in parentheses are those of the longitudinal cohort.

In summary, the reactions of the students indicated that the Morning Meeting is liked very much and appears to offer them an effective means for improving social interaction skills. Students who have experienced *The Responsive Classroom* approach generally feel very positive about their personal outcomes and the instructional process!

Figure 3

Summary of Students' Responses to the RC Questionnaire at the Conclusion of Years 1 and 2

<b>Kensington Students' Reactions to <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> Program</b>					
Spring 1997 + 1998					
<b>Learning to get along better with my classmates was talked about in class</b>					
<i>Just About Every Day</i>	<i>Very Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Almost Never</i>	<b>Mean 2.33</b>	
26.5% (47.6%)	31.8% (23.8%)	36.9% (26.2%)	4.65% (2.38%)		
<b>Spending time in class to practice social skills and ways to solve problems with others is</b>					
<i>Not Important</i>	<i>Kind of Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<b>Mean 3.41</b>	
.6% (0%)	13% (4.76%)	34.45% (28.57%)	54.55% (66.67%)		
<b>Morning Meetings are usually</b>					
<i>Not Useful</i>	<i>Kind of Useful</i>	<i>Useful</i>	<i>Very Useful</i>	<b>Mean 3.38</b>	
3.35% (2.38%)	11.9% (9.52%)	28.85% (47.61%)	55.9% (40.48%)		
<b>Chances to make personal choices about learning and working in the classroom are</b>					
<i>Not Important</i>	<i>Kind of Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<b>Mean 3.34</b>	
3.1% (7.14%)	12.7% (11.9%)	31.3% (28.57%)	52.65% (52.38%)		
<b>Classroom rules and consequences for not following the rules in my classroom are</b>					
<i>Not Clear</i>	<i>Kind of Clear</i>	<i>Clear</i>	<i>Very Clear</i>	<b>Mean 3.77</b>	
0% (0%)	4.15% (7.14%)	16.2% (28.57%)	79.6% (64.29%)		
<b>The best way to describe how I feel about <i>The Responsive Classroom</i> methods that my teacher used this year is</b>					
<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>O.K.</i>	<i>Bad</i>	<i>Very Bad</i>	<b>Mean 4.52</b>
47.85% (66.67%)	27.3% (28.57%)	23.85% (4.76%)	.5% (0%)	.5% (0%)	
<b>This year my skills for getting along with others</b>					
<i>Got Worse</i>	<i>Did Not Change Much</i>	<i>Improved</i>	<i>Improved A Lot</i>	<b>Mean 3.18</b>	
3.85% (4.76%)	21.6% (23.81%)	28.2% (26.19%)	46.5% (45.24%)		

Data based on the responses of 171 students in grades 3 through 5. Mean ratings are based on either a 4 or 5 point scale where the ratings of 1 equal "negative" anchors the ratings of 4 or 5 equal "positive" anchors.

## Conclusions

The information summarized in this report features behavior rating and questionnaire data for students from two schools in Springfield, MA during a two year evaluation study of *The Responsive Classroom* approach to instruction. This data was collected and analyzed to help provide answers to questions about (a) the nature of relationships among social behaviors and changes in social and academic behavior for a diverse sample of students and (b) to gain insights into the effectiveness and acceptability of *The Responsive Classroom* curriculum as implemented in 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. A multirater or multisource assessment approach was used to gather student data from teachers, parents, and students themselves at two points, approximately six months apart during the 1996-1997 and the 1997-1998 school years. The body of this report has provided a detailed account of results starting with general findings about the entire sample's average social behavior ratings and ending with specific accounts of teachers' and students' reactions to various aspects of *The Responsive Classroom* approach. It should be noted that a subsample of 66 students participated during both years of the study, thus providing some opportunities for insights into the longitudinal effects of *The Responsive Classroom* approach on both social behavior and academic achievement. This subsample of students was somewhat unrepresentative due to the absence of 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

At this point, it is appropriate to revisit the major questions motivating this evaluation and to offer data-based answers to them based on two years of data from over 170 students and their parents and teachers.

### **Question #1: How do teachers use *The Responsive Classroom* approach in their classrooms over the course of a school year?**

Teachers reported that they liked the RC approach and perceived it to be effective. However, several teachers indicated it was difficult to implement and the self-reporting usage data seems to support this perspective as well. Only the Morning Meeting component of the approach was used daily. The other components were reported to be used 2 or 3 times per week, which is appropriate. The use of RC during Year 2, as reported by teachers, was slightly more frequent than during Year 1. Thus, at this time it appears that the RC approach is used with good integrity at KAES. Previous research has shown a direct relationship between increased use of the RC approach and improvements in students' social and academic behaviors, and possibly academic achievement.

### **Question #2: What effect is *The Responsive Classroom* approach having on Kensington students?**

*The Responsive Classroom* approach is perceived to be effective by most all educational stakeholders surveyed. Actual behavior change data with a substantial proportion of students reinforces this perception. Results across both years and the longitudinal cohort showed improvements in discrete social skills and academic behaviors, with concomitant decreases in problem behaviors over the course of a school year in students exposed to the RC approach than students not exposed to it. Perhaps the most compelling data about the RC approach is that it seems to also create conditions that facilitate academic achievement as measured by a standardized achievement test and documented in a series of regression analysis. The data combined the Time 1 behavior ratings and the Time 2 achievement test results in the most compelling data to date to suggest a positive predictive relationship between students' social skills and their achievement test results. Thus, as suggested by other researchers, social skills can act as academic enablers and manifest their impact on objective test scores.

Although the relationship between social skills and academic achievement appears strong and was noted in the ratings of teachers and parents, it should be noted that the portion of students who made significant gains in terms of their social skills development was only modest over the period of this project. With increased exposure to the RC approach or one with a similar emphasis on learning to work collaboratively with peers and to cooperate with teachers, it is expected that more students will exhibit improvements in social behavior and concomitant improvements in academic functioning.

**Question #3: What differences in social skills exist among students from Kensington and the comparison school?**

The social skills of students in KAES were perceived to be somewhat lower than those of students in the control school when the study started in October, 1996. However, over the course of the two years, the KAES students' social skills were observed to improve relative to their peers in the control school. Thus, by June, 1998, students at KAES, on average, were exhibiting valued social skills more frequently and unacceptable problem behaviors less frequently than students sampled in the control school. A similar pattern with regard to academic behaviors and achievement test scores was also observed at KAES. From an explanatory perspective, it is reasonable to conclude that the exposure to the RC approach contributed to these moderate, but meaningful, improvements, although other instructional innovations at KAES may also have contributed to improvements in both social and academic functioning.

The calculation of an effect size statistic was used to translate the differential impact of the RC approach on students exposed to it when compared to students with similar backgrounds who were not exposed to it. The effect sizes based on teachers' and students' ratings suggest that the RC approach has a moderately strong impact on the social skills of elementary school students.

**Question #4: Is there a support system that exists in Kensington Avenue Elementary School that is different than in the comparison school?**

A strong support system exists for the continued use of the RC in KAES—teachers have been trained to use the RC approach, like it, and are using it frequently. Students also like it and the administrative team in the school encourages its use and the continued evaluation of its impact. Parents of students at KAES also demonstrated a strong willingness to spend time to evaluate the effects of the RC approach. Comparable information about the support structure for instructional efforts such as the RC approach was not collected from the comparison school during this evaluation given educators' time constraints. In brief, there is solid support for the use of the RC approach and continued interest in evaluating its impact on students' social and academic functioning.

***Limitations of the Study***

Before ending this report, it is appropriate to mention a couple of limitations that have influenced the interpretation of the evaluation findings. First, the behavior change data concerning the students is largely based on observers' ratings. Ratings have been shown to correlate highly with direct observations, but are not as sensitive to small changes in behavior. Generally, when reliable changes in ratings occur, they are indicative of relatively large changes in actual behavior. Therefore, ratings often underestimate the actual degree or amount of change in students' behavior. The implication of the present study is that the behavior change data for the RC and NRC students alike is probably a conservative estimate (i.e., underestimated) of their actual change.

A final limitation of the study was the lack of questionnaire data from the non-Responsive Classroom school. This type of data provides a meaningful context for interpreting the attitudes and perceptions of the participants in the RC approach.

***Final Observations***

The study was conducted as designed, integrating multiple forms of data from multiple informants. *The Responsive Classroom* approach that is operating in the Kensington Avenue Elementary School is an acceptable and moderately effective method for enhancing the social behavior of young children, and appears to create conditions that foster academic achievement. Specifically,

- The frequency of problem behaviors of students decreases significantly with a year or more of exposure to instruction that is organized and delivered within a *Responsive Classroom*.
- The frequency of students' social skills improve noticeably in classrooms where they have been exposed to instruction that emphasizes *The Responsive Classroom* approach.
- The social skills taught and reinforced in *The Responsive Classroom* approach seem to function as academic enablers, resulting in improved scores on achievement tests.

With more time—time for teachers to learn and use the approach, and especially for students to be exposed to it—it is highly likely that the benefits of the approach will be even more evident behaviorally and academically. These conclusions are based on a reliable database that spans two years and includes a diverse sample of students. The KAES students who participated in the study for both years showed similar, if not slightly better, results in all areas than KAES students who participated only one of the years. This is the first evaluation study of the RC approach where data was collected on individual students for more than one year. The gains in social skills and academic functioning observed during the first year for these students were maintained in the second year. Students in *Responsive Classrooms* are responding to instruction and demonstrating improvements in their behavior and academics in ways that teachers and students alike can see!

## **References**

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Elliott, S.N., (1995). The responsive classroom approach: Its effectiveness and acceptability. (Final Evaluation Report). University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Responsive Classroom Usage Checklist**

## Responsive Classroom Evaluation Project

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one: \_\_\_\_\_ I **have been** trained to use *The Responsive Classroom* methods and currently use these methods in my classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have been trained to use *The Responsive Classroom* methods but **do not** currently use them in my classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have **not** been trained to use *The Responsive Classroom* methods.

**Instructions:** *The Responsive Classroom* (RC) Program is being used in some schools in this district. For the days in Week 1, please **estimate** how often you used each of the six main components of the program with your class last week. For the days in Week 2, please record your **actual use** of the program components for the current week. Complete the chart below by using a + to indicate you used the RC component on a given day and a 0 to indicate you did not use the RC component for the day. Please write any comments or suggestions on the back of this sheet.

Please return the completed chart to: \_\_\_\_\_ in the enclosed envelope. Thank You!

Responsive Classroom Components	Week 1 (Estimated Usage)					Week 2 (Actual Usage)				
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
<b>Morning Meeting</b>										
<b>Role Playing</b>										
<b>Problem Solving Class Meeting</b>										
<b>Time-Out</b>										
<b>Choice Time</b>										
<b>Guided Discovery</b>										

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Responsive Classroom Questionnaires**

## Responsive Classroom Evaluation Project

Responsive Classroom Evaluation Project  
Spring, 1997

Dear Teacher,

Your perceptions and opinions about *The Responsive Classroom* (RC) Program are requested. Some teachers in the Springfield Schools have significant experience with this program, while others have little or not experience with the program. Regardless of your experience with the RC Program, your feedback is important to the ongoing evaluation of this approach to classroom instruction and management.

This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete and will be used as part of an evaluation of efforts to improve the social behavior of young students in your school district. Your honest responses to a series of questions would be valued. Your responses will remain confidential (your name is not requested), and the information will be summarized along with approximately 20 other teachers.

To help us summarize and more fully understand the responses from all teachers, we would appreciate having the following background information about you:

### Background Information

Sex:  Female  Male

Instruction Level:  Prek-K  1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grades  4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grades

Trained to use *The Responsive Classroom*:  Yes  No

### Instructions for Completing the Survey

On pages 2 through 4 of this survey, you are asked to respond to questions about your students' social behavior, implementation of instructional innovations like *The Responsive Classroom*, and finally about yourself. Please be honest; **there are no right or wrong answers**. Your opinions and observations are valuable.

Once you have completed this survey, **please return it in the enclosed preaddressed envelope** by **June 5, 1997**.

## About My Class This Year (Circle one answer for each question)

### 1. My students' interpersonal or social skills with peers in general are

Very Poor    Poor    Good    Very Good    Exceptional

### 2. My students' abilities to solve problems with other people in general are

Very Poor    Poor    Good    Very Good    Exceptional

### 3. My students' interpersonal or social skills overall this year

Did Not Improve    Improved Slightly    Improved Significantly

### 4. My students' overall achievement level this year has been

Very Poor    Poor    Good    Very Good    Exceptional

### 5. My students' reactions to school this year have been

Very Negative    Slightly Negative    Neutral    Slightly Positive    Very Positive

### 6. Parental involvement in my class this year could be characterized as

Very Low    Low    Moderate    High    Very High

## Reactions to The Responsive Classroom Program

This program is being used by some teachers in the Springfield Public Schools. The program is designed "to build a classroom into a learning community where high social and academic goals are attained." This program involves:

**Classroom organization** which provides for active interest areas for students, space for student-created displays of work, and an appropriate mix of whole class, group, and individual instruction.

**A Morning Meeting** which provides children daily opportunities to practice greetings, conversation, sharing, and problem solving.

**Rules and Logical Consequences** which are generated, modeled, and role-played with classmates and facilitate order and discipline in the classroom.

**Choice Time** for all children each day which provides students opportunities to take control of their own learning in some meaningful way, both individually and cooperatively.

**Guided Discovery** which is a deliberate method of instruction for introducing students to new curriculum content, learning materials, and ways of behaving.

**Assessment and Reporting to Parents** which is an evolving process of mutual communication and understanding.

7. Before receiving this survey, had you heard anything about *The Responsive Classroom Program*? (check)  No  Maybe  Yes

8. Based on my understanding of *The Responsive Classroom Program*, the best way to characterize my reaction to it would be (circle one answer)

Strongly Dislike It                      Slightly Dislike It                      Slightly Like It                      Strongly Like It

9. Based on my understanding of *The Responsive Classroom Program*, I believe the effectiveness of this program for improving my students' social behavior would be (circle one answer)

Not Effective                      A Little Effective                      Effective                      Very Effective

10. My interest in using *The Responsive Classroom Program* can best be characterized as (circle one answer)

Very Low                      Low                      Moderate                      High                      Very High

11. Most teachers would find implementing the RC Program (circle one answer)

Very Easy                      Easy                      Difficult                      Very Difficult                      I'm Unsure

12. The aspect of the RC Program that I like most is

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13. The aspect of the RC Program that I like least is

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14. The aspect of the RC Program that students like most is

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15. The aspect of the RC Program that students like least is

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16. What type(s) of support is (are) needed to implement the RC Program?

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## About Me and Innovations in My Classroom

*The Responsive Classroom* Program represents an instructional innovation designed to affect students' social behavior and academic functioning. Your reactions to this innovation can affect its use and ultimately its effectiveness. Please respond to each of the next twelve statements by circling the number 0, 1, 2, or 3 to indicate how true each statement is for you.

	0 Irrelevant	1 Not True of Me	2 Somewhat True of Me	3 Very True of Me
17. I would like to know more about the purpose of this innovation.	0	1	2	3
18. I am concerned about criticism of my work with this innovation.	0	1	2	3
19. I wonder how use of this innovation will affect my relationship with my teaching colleagues.	0	1	2	3
20. I would like to develop working relationships with administrators to facilitate the use of this innovation.	0	1	2	3
21. I am concerned about facilitating use of this innovation in view of limited resources.	0	1	2	3
22. I spend little time thinking about this innovation.	0	1	2	3
23. I would like to help others in the use of this innovation.	0	1	2	3
24. I see a potential conflict between facilitating this innovation and overloading staff.	0	1	2	3
25. I am concerned that communication and problem-solving with this innovation takes too much time.	0	1	2	3
26. I have alternative innovations in mind that would better serve the needs of our students.	0	1	2	3
27. I am concerned about finding time needed for this innovation.	0	1	2	3
28. I would like to inform others of the progress from this innovation.	0	1	2	3

If you have any additional comments about *The Responsive Classroom* program, please attach a separate sheet to this survey. Your thoughts are appreciated! Please use the preaddressed envelope to return this questionnaire. Thank you!!!

## Student Reactions to the Responsive Classroom

Dear Student,

This year your teacher has been working with you and your classmates to improve your abilities to develop good relationships with others and to make your classroom a good place to learn. Your teacher has been using teaching methods which are part of an approach called *The Responsive Classroom*. We want to know what you honestly think of this program and how it worked in your classroom. Please take your time and answer each of the nine questions below. There are no right or wrong answers and we do not need to know your name.

Please complete the information in the box below before answering the questions. If you have questions about the meaning of words or what to do, it is okay to ask your teacher for help. Thank you!

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Girl: \_\_\_\_\_ Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

### Circle the Best Answer

1. **Learning to get along better with my classmates was talked about in class**

Just About Every Day      Very Often      Sometimes      Almost Never

2. **Spending time in class to practice social skills and ways to solve problems with others is**

Not Important      Kind of Important      Important      Very Important

3. **Morning meetings are usually**

Not Useful      Kind of Useful      Useful      Very Useful

4. **Chances to make personal choices about learning and working in the classroom are**

Not Important      Kind of Important      Important      Very Important

5. **Classroom rules and consequences for not following the rules in my classroom are**

Not Clear      Kind of Clear      Clear      Very Clear

### Write a Brief Answer to Each Question

6. The thing **I liked most** about Morning Meetings is

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7. The thing I **liked least** about Morning Meetings is

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Circle the Best Answer

8. The best way to describe how I feel about *The Responsive Classroom* is

Very Good      Good      Okay      Bad      Very Bad

9. This year my skills for getting along with others

Got Worse      Did Not Change Much      Improved      Improved A Lot

**Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to your teacher when you are finished.**