What is The Responsive Classroom® Assessment Tool?

The Responsive Classroom® Assessment Tool is a rating system consisting of 125 specific aspects of Responsive Classroom practice on which teachers can evaluate themselves. The items are organized in eight sections:

- Section 1: Arrival Time
- Section 2: Interactive Modeling
- Section 3: Morning Meeting
- Section 4: Guided Discovery
- Section 5: Academic Choice
- Section 6: Classroom Organization
- Section 7: Classroom Management and Teacher Language
- Section 8: Working with Families

For each item included in these sections, the assessment tool provides specific and concrete examples of how a teacher’s practice might look at three different levels of Responsive Classroom implementation:

- A beginning level at which teachers recognize that their implementation needs work
- A middle level at which teachers are making good progress but still have some areas for growth
- A higher level at which teachers feel that their practice is strong but needs refinements at a very sophisticated and complex level

For instance, item “MM1” addresses whether teachers are providing an adequate space for Morning Meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MM 1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td><img src="table.png" alt="Table" /></td>
<td><img src="table.png" alt="Table" /></td>
<td><img src="table.png" alt="Table" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our Morning Meetings ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... few students have room to sit comfortably in a circle/oval and view everyone and everything.</td>
<td>... most students have room to sit comfortably in a circle/oval and view everyone and everything.</td>
<td>... all students have room to sit comfortably in a circle/oval and view everyone and everything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The “1” rating indicates to teachers that there are some problems with their implementation of this item—that children need more room to sit comfortably and should be able to see everyone and everything. This observation can lead teachers to reflect on the possibility that children who are not comfortable or who cannot see may be less likely to model desired behavior. Teachers giving themselves the “3” rating know that they are meeting most students’ needs but still have some growth to make in ensuring that all, not just most, students can sit comfortably and see everyone and everything.

Teachers at the highest rating level know that they have provided adequate space for Morning Meetings. They can then think about space issues at a higher level: Are students choosing to sit next to the same friends all the time? Is the space being used at other times of the day to maximize instruction? Are instructional supplies, like an easel, markers, and books, easily accessible to the teacher? By providing concrete examples of what implementation looks like at each level, the assessment tool gives teachers a practical idea of how they are doing with a given aspect of their Responsive Classroom practice, and it gives specific information about what they might change in order to improve.

In addition to looking at information about a specific aspect of practice, a teacher can come up with an overall rating for a larger area of Responsive Classroom practice. For instance, MM1, the item referring to space for Morning Meetings, is part of the Morning Meeting section. A teacher can assess her progress on MM1 and all of the other Morning Meeting items to come up with a global score for how she is developing with Morning Meeting practice as a whole.

Some teachers may want to use all 125 items to assess their complete Responsive Classroom practice. This provides an assessment of their overall Responsive Classroom implementation.

Although the assessment tool relies on a numerical rating system to build some objectivity into the process of evaluation, the goal of the assessment tool is not to obtain a particular score. Rather, as discussed in the next section, the primary purpose of the tool is to spark reflection and growth in Responsive Classroom practice and ultimately to lead to better teaching and learning.