



ANNUAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT  
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# **Roma Education Initiative**

**Academic Year 2004/2005**

**Wide Open School Foundation**

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research on the second year of the project Roma educational initiative („REI“) in Slovakia confirmed a positive impression educational programs for the Roma population, especially for children and youth, leave not only on the Roma community but also on representatives of educational institutions participating in the project and representatives of local towns. In alignment with the main goal of the project – to support desegregation in education and to contribute to improvement of school performance of Roma children - the research focused on observing key factors in various project components implemented in four different locations of eastern Slovakia in the academic year 2004/05 and provides comparison with the previous academic year.

All students in the target group (except of students in Jarovnice) were educated in integrated classes. Attitudes of teachers, relationships among students, cooperation between schools and families, and the overall atmosphere in the schools improved under the influence of the project's implementation. Elements of Roma culture and facts of life were integrated into the curriculum.

In relation to the research questions, we can conclude that:

- A. In participating kindergarten classes the school attendance rate of children improved significantly. The number of missed lessons also decreased in primary schools by an average of 163.5 per student and the number of unexcused absences decreased by 20.2 on average per student.
- B. The school performance of students in the target group improved gradually. This results directly correlated to the improved school attendance rate, a change in the educational approach of teachers and development in the cooperation of schools with families.
- C. The average student grade point average significantly improved in Grades 2 and 3, and slightly in Grades 5 and 6 – which is a good starting point for upcoming academic years.
- D. The trend of integrating Roma students in regular classes continued throughout the academic year. However, in Jarovnice, Roma parents favor enrolling their children in the Roma primary school.
- E. The number of contacts with families increased in every kindergarten – for example, in Jarovnice and Rudňany, the number of parent visits during classes increased four times.
- F. The number of parent classroom visits as well as attendance rates in parent-teacher meetings in primary schools increased.
- G. As a result of tutoring and mentoring programs, the number of students admitted to secondary schools offering a high school diploma increased.
- H. More teachers familiarized themselves with the Step by step methodology and continued to successfully implement it in their educational work.
- I. A discussion concerning the need to educate Roma children and students in an integrated way developed. New ways of ensuring common activities between Roma and non-Roma children in kindergartens in Jarovnice, Rudňany and Smižany were sought.
- J. Opinion of teachers about the work of Roma teacher's assistants is positive.
- K. Representatives of towns with participating schools consider the project a positive contribution and understand that NGOs cannot take over the role of the government in a long-term process of integrating Roma people into the mainstream society.

## II. INTRODUCTION

According to educated opinion, there are 400,000 Roma inhabitants in Slovakia, a large part of whom are of school age. Many Roma citizens live in areas where unemployment reaches around 30 % and among the Roma population it is as higher. One of the reasons for the high Roma unemployment rate is in part their low level of education.

In order to increase the chances of the new Roma generation to successfully engage in social life and compete on the labor market it is crucial to increase their educational level.

The social situation of Roma people is difficult, especially in eastern and central Slovakia. The life of Roma in isolated villages on the outskirts of towns has not only its own specific issues but also very negative consequences for the education of children. As transportation companies gradually cancel more routes, the everyday commute for school children becomes problematic.

The attendance in kindergartens was negatively influenced by an introduction of school fees also for children with a delayed primary school start and for children over 5 years old. The reason being that mainly in Košice-Šaca, the submission of financial need (on the basis of which the school fees are forgiven) was practically impossible and children stopped attending kindergarten for financial reasons in the second semester.

The low education level of the Roma people has a direct influence on the community they live in – often it leads to unemployment, dependence on social security payments, failure in school, low level of hygiene and unsuitable health situations in Roma settlements.

Academic success of Roma children is a key issue. It is increasingly more difficult for uneducated people to find jobs today and very often at least high school education is required by employers. However, there are only 300 current Roma students in Slovakia's high schools, which creates a small population that will further advance to universities and establish young Roma intelligence. The implication of this situation is that only a minimal number of Roma students complete education higher than primary school.

Despite the fact that the official authorities created multiple materials concerning the improvement of education for Roma children, their implementation has encountered many difficulties and problems.

The Wide Open School Foundation has consistently undertaken to improve the education of such children in problematic areas of Slovakia, on the basis of its experience with Roma students' education.

### **The main objectives of this project are:**

1. to eliminate or reduce segregation of Roma children and students through the creation and implementation of a holistic approach aimed at improving Roma children's' learning and
2. to advance changes in educational policies in relation to Roma children, on local as well as national level.

The importance of the above mentioned main objectives lies in the fact that integrated, or inclusive education of Roma children is an effective method not only to increase the quality of their education but also a requirement towards their future full participation in the society and inclusion from the majority population and toward the coexistence of several cultures in the society.

This is in accordance with the Slovak Constitution, which states the right of each child to education regardless of his or her ethnicity and the right to educate children in their mother tongue.

The project consists of four main components with specific purposes:

### **1. Pre-school education**

The goal of this component is to prevent automatic placement of Roma children in special schools and segregation that follows in the school and community as a result of such formal and informal educational program.

### **2. Education in primary and secondary school**

The goal is to improve the Roma students' educational outcomes and develop appropriate support structures for desegregation of Roma students on local level and secondary school access.

### **3. Vocational education**

The goal of this part is to develop a model of student tutoring and mentoring for Roma dropouts and leads to gaining marketable skills.

### **4. Policy influence and change**

The goal is to create Working desegregation committees to develop recommendations to improve the system to support a successful integration of Roma children and youth into mainstream school system, both on a local and national level.

**The main purpose of this research** is to examine whether the created and implemented approaches will prove effective and positively influence school attendance and academic performance of students included in the project, the attitude of parents toward school, teachers' opinion about the implementation of the student-based approach, and the involvement of the Roma families and community in the educational process.

#### **The research concentrated in the following main areas:**

1. School attendance in kindergartens and primary schools.
2. Academic performance in primary schools.
3. Involvement of parents in the educational process and their cooperation with the school.
4. Parents' opinions about school and its influence on their children.
5. Teachers' opinions about the implementation of the project in their classrooms.
6. Opinions of students' from participating schools.
7. Examination of changes in participating classes.
8. Opinions about the function of a Roma teacher's assistant in participating schools.

### III. METHODOLOGY

**Main research questions** are closely related to areas of research and are connected with the question of participating students' academic performance and in conjunction with other components indicative of the students' success.

- A. Has school attendance improved in project classes?
- B. Has academic performance improved under the influence of pedagogical approach that respects specific and differentiated educational needs of students included in the project?
- C. Has systematic pre-school education in kindergartens influenced the students' attendance of mainstream schools and Roma children's' integration in such schools?
- D. Has the cooperation of families and schools improved and the interest in the creation of a common strategy increased as a result of the implementation of new approaches and their systematic inclusion in school life?
- E. Has tutoring and mentoring increased the number of students continuing on to high schools?
- F. Which methods and techniques of pedagogical work do teachers use most often and effectively?
- G. What do Roma students' teachers consider the most important in increasing the quality of education of their students?

It is apparent that even after two years of the project it is impossible to answer all the research questions. This is because an investigation into educational effects requires long-term research. However, we assumed that systematic education and a all-encompassing approach to the work with students and families will lead to the betterment of school conditions and the success rate of students.

Within the research, several **research methods** were used:

- Observation of classes included in the project
- Interviews with schools' head staff
- Analysis of academic performance
- Analysis of school attendance
- Teacher questionnaire
- Interviews with teachers and Roma teacher's assistants
- Student questionnaire
- Interviews with town mayors

Research tools (questionnaires and interviews) were adapted for specific conditions and needs of Slovak schools so that it was possible to utilize them in accordance with the goals of this research. Special graphs were created to register students' attendance and academic performance as were interview questions for kindergarten teachers and mayors of town with schools participating in the project.

Data was collected throughout the entire academic year. At the beginning of the year we concentrated on the collection of basic information about classes and students included in the project. Local project coordinators created lists of students and in cooperation with the researchers informed teachers about the method of recording students' school attendance, parents' involvement in the cooperation with school and about the system of tutorials parents took part in during the school year. In addition, a plan of trainings was created and information about students and classes involved in the project was collected by local coordinators and their colleagues in accordance with the research plan.

During each semester, four observations were implemented in each class with the exception of the Košice-Šaca kindergarten. **Observation was only conducted in the first semester, due to that fact of requested fees. A new regulation introduced school fees for all children. Based on this decision parents stopped sending their children to the kindergarten and shifted them to the community center.**

Local coordinators were in constant contact with their corresponding kindergartens and primary schools throughout the entire academic year.

In order to analyze collected data we used statistical methods, comparison, content analysis and qualitative research approaches.

The research team had to tackle several problems and challenges throughout the research period. These stemmed mainly from unwillingness of some teachers and parents to answer the questionnaires, some students move during the academic year and some parents enrolled their child in a kindergarten, but attendance was irregular, or the child only attended morning activities.

The situation in schools was also influenced by a lack of finances that local townships received for the operations of kindergartens and primary schools. Finances are a determining factor in the availability of proper equipment and staffing for the educational process.

### **Research sample**

The research sample was divided into several subgroups:

1. Roma children in kindergarten classes participating in the project.
2. Roma students in primary schools participating in the project.
3. Parents of children/students participating in the project.
4. Kindergarten and primary school teachers.
5. Head staff in schools participating in the project.
6. Town mayors in communities with schools participating in the project.
7. Roma TAs in schools participating in the project.

## IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### IV.1. Academic performance and school attendance

#### IV.1.1. Research sample

In the 2004/05 academic year, 12 kindergarten classes participated in the REI project (three classes in Jarovnice, Košice-Šaca, Rudňany and Smižany) with an overall enrollment of 178 children (in September 2003 there were 137 children). The following graph presents an overview of the participating kindergartens.

Table 1: Overview of kindergartens participating in REI project

| Kindergarten | Number of classes |           | Number of children |            |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|
|              | 2003/04           | 2004/05   | 2003/04            | 2004/05    |
| Jarovnice    | 3                 | 3         | 37                 | 37         |
| Košice-Šaca  | 1                 | 3         | 17                 | 20         |
| Rudňany      | 3                 | 3         | 50                 | 51         |
| Smižany      | 3                 | 3         | 66                 | 70         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>10</b>         | <b>12</b> | <b>170</b>         | <b>178</b> |

In the 2004/05 academic year, 43 primary school classes participated in the REI project from 4 primary schools (Jarovnice, Košice-Šaca, Rudňany and Smižany) with an overall enrollment of 391 students (in September 2004 there were 310 students in 36 primary school classes). The increase in number of students enrolled in the project is due to the continuation of observation of students in 5th grade at the Rudňany primary school as well as a higher interest level in participation from the Košice-Šaca primary school – here the number increased to five classes from the original one.

Table 2: Overview of primary schools participating in REI project

| Primary school | Number of classes/grade |                         | Number of students |            |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|
|                | 2003/04                 | 2004/05                 | 2003/04            | 2004/05    |
| Jarovnice      | 1/9 <sup>th</sup> grade | 1/9 <sup>th</sup> grade | 25                 | 32         |
| Košice-Šaca    | 1/1 <sup>st</sup> grade | 1/0 grade               | 14                 | 12         |
|                |                         | 2/1 <sup>st</sup> grade |                    | 30         |
|                |                         | 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> grade |                    | 17         |
|                |                         | 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> grade |                    | 17         |
| <b>Total</b>   |                         |                         | <b>16</b>          | <b>76</b>  |
| Rudňany        | 2/0 grade               | 2/0 grade               | 19                 | 25         |
|                | 2/1 <sup>st</sup> grade | 3/1 <sup>st</sup> grade | 30                 | 34         |
|                | 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> grade | 2/2 <sup>nd</sup> grade | 19                 | 19         |
|                | 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> grade | 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> grade | 17                 | 16         |
|                | 1/4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 2/4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 18                 | 18         |
|                | 2/5 <sup>th</sup> grade |                         | 19                 |            |
| <b>Total</b>   |                         |                         | <b>103</b>         | <b>131</b> |
| Smižany        | 2/1 <sup>st</sup> grade | 3/1 <sup>st</sup> grade | 12                 | 15         |
|                | 2/2 <sup>nd</sup> grade | 2/2 <sup>nd</sup> grade | 13                 | 9          |
|                | 3/3 <sup>rd</sup> grade | 2/3 <sup>rd</sup> grade | 18                 | 12         |
|                | 4/4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 3/4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 22/21              | 17         |
|                | 3/5 <sup>th</sup> grade | 3/5 <sup>th</sup> grade | 18                 | 17         |
|                | 3/6 <sup>th</sup> grade | 3/6 <sup>th</sup> grade | 19                 | 17         |
|                | 4/7 <sup>th</sup> grade | 3/7 <sup>th</sup> grade | 22                 | 18         |
|                | 3/8 <sup>th</sup> grade | 4/8 <sup>th</sup> grade | 26                 | 30         |
|                | 3/9 <sup>th</sup> grade | 3/9 <sup>th</sup> grade | 14                 | 17         |
| <b>Total</b>   |                         |                         | <b>164</b>         | <b>152</b> |

#### IV.1.2. Student performance

The results achieved by students are monitored through grade point average. A basic overview about the success rate according to various towns and schools is shown in the following table. Students of Grade 0 and Grade 1 are not evaluated with grades but verbally.

Table 3: Overview of the student success rate in all grades (academic year 2004/05)

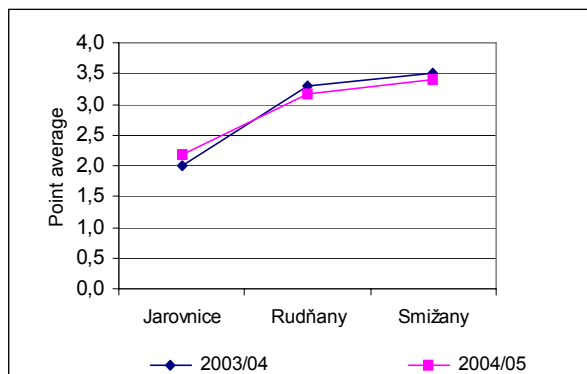
| Primary school \ Grade | Jarovnice   | Košice-Šaca | Rudňany     | Smižany     |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 0                      | -           | -           | -           | -           |
| 1 <sup>st</sup>        | -           | -           | -           | -           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>        | -           | 2.69        | 2.70        | 2.88        |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>        | -           | 2.70        | 3.09        | 3.32        |
| 4 <sup>th</sup>        | -           | -           | 3.57        | 3.74        |
| 5 <sup>th</sup>        | -           | -           | 3.28        | 3.70        |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>        | -           | -           | -           | 3.17        |
| 7 <sup>th</sup>        | -           | -           | -           | 3.95        |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>        | -           | -           | -           | 3.80        |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>        | 2.17        | -           | -           | 3.35        |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>2.17</b> | <b>2.69</b> | <b>3.16</b> | <b>3.39</b> |

In the two compared schools (Rudňany and Smižany) the overall student success rate increased slightly (Graph 1).

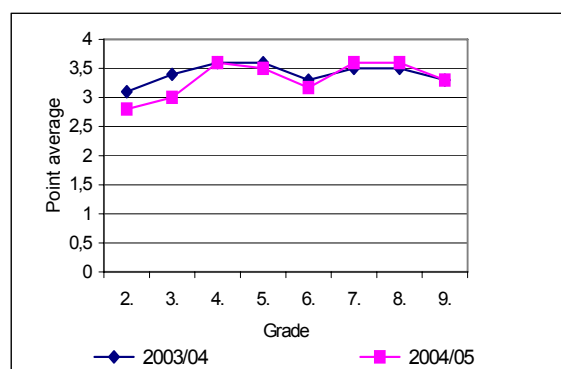
Due to the fact that in Jarovnice a tutoring and mentoring plan is in place, the success rates displayed on Graph 2 of students in Grade 9 is not comparable to the success rate of 9 graders in academic year 2003/04 (these are not the same students). In the remainder of the schools, the same population was observed.

Graphs 1-3 do not include results from Košice-Šaca because in the previous year only students in Grade 1 participated in Project REI.

Graph 1: Comparison of student success rates in various primary schools (academic years 2003/04 and 2004/05)

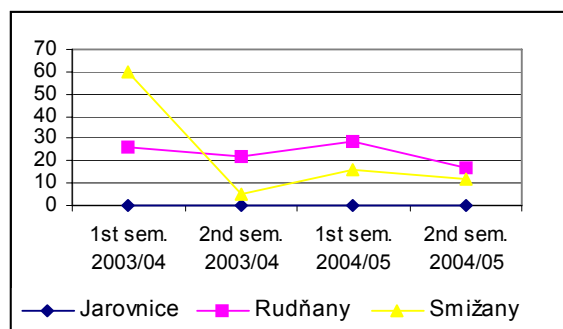


Graph 2: Comparison of student success rates in various grades (academic years 2003/04 and 2004/05)



From the comparison of different grades (academic years 2003/04 and 2004/05) clearly shown on Graph 2 we can summarize that a significant improvement in the student success rate in Grade 3 (increase by 0.4) and Grade 2 (increase by 0.3) has occurred as well as a slight increase in the success rate of students in Grades 5 and 6 (by 0.1).

Graph 3: Comparison of failing student during research period



As Graph 3 shows, all primary school students in Jarovnice passed. The number of failing students in Smižany and Rudňany decreased toward the end of the academic year. It is clear that the work of teachers, parents and other participants in the project contributed to the positive results in student performance.

Teachers of students in Grade 0 evaluated the performance of their students: „All students are from Roma settlements. The students initially had significant difficulties adjusting to the new environment – as half of the students did not attend pre-school institutions and the other half only short-term. At the end of the academic year all students were familiar with basic rule of hygiene and social behavior.“

The progress of students was also apparent in their knowledge of Slovak language. Some student’s vocabulary was initially below average. To achieve an increase in their vocabulary, the use of reading, listening to fairy-tales and poems, and games with pictures were used. Today students are able to answer questions with a simple sentence and with the help of questions and pictures tell a simple story plot. Each student attended tutoring once a week.

A Roma teacher’s assistance was of great help in the work with the students. The accompanied students to and from school, helped them with table manners in the school

canteen, assisted with following hygiene and cleanliness rules and was responsible for the drinking schedule. She was crucial in overcoming the initial language barrier.”

Teachers evaluated the non-graded Grades with the following: „The majority of students attended Grade 0. They were able to follow rules of hygiene, a drinking schedule and had a basic vocabulary. Connecting consonants and vowels to build words, reading/understanding words and transcribing printed text proved to be a significant challenge for students. During math classes they learned to add and subtract, solve problems and got familiar with some geometry terms.

The vocabulary of students increased as well as their ability to pronounce words. They got used to being with their peers, also those from different classes. They became familiar also with teachers of different classes and the presence of other adults in and out of the classroom. The students’ self-confidence increased, sometimes they were even overly brave, even rude.

A Roma teacher’s assistant was crucial in aiding the teacher with Roma students’ integration. The language skills development and acceptance of the Slovak language increased compared to the first semester which became apparent during morning meetings when each student had the chance to tell what concerns him or her or describe what is happening at home with parents or siblings.”

### IV.1.3. School attendance

The second exactly measurable data is school attendance, which can be measured by the number of lessons, during which the student was not present and how many of these absences can be excused. From that we can derive average number of absences per student.

Analysis of this data shows the following results.

#### IV.1.3.1. Kindergarten attendance

When compiling results about kindergarten attendance rate, we only took into consideration the children attending all-day programs.

Table 4: School attendance in kindergarten, 2004/05 academic year

| Kindergarten | Number of days of absence per year | Average per child |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Jarovnice    | 1,063                              | 28,7              |
| Košice-Šaca  | 654                                | 40.9              |
| Rudňany      | 884                                | 17.3              |
| Smižany      | 2,134                              | 41.8              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>4,735</b>                       | <b>30.7</b>       |

VD – days absent

Kindergarten attendance rate improved drastically as compared to the previous academic year in three kindergartens – Jarovnice, Košice-Šaca and Smižany. The number of days during which absence was recorded decreased by 11.7 to 20.1. The average number of days absent from kindergarten per child was recorded in Rudňany (17.3) in spite of the fact that the total number of days absent increased slightly (due to the increased enrollment numbers of children in project REI).

The teacher in Smižany commented *that children often fell sick (e.g. cold, flu) and some infectious diseases smallpox and scarlet fever) caused a long term absence from kindergarten classes.*

#### IV.1.3.2. Primary school attendance

A comprehensive overview of primary school students' attendance in Jarovnice, Košice-Šaca, Rudňany and Smižany in the 2004/05 academic year is shown in table 5. More detailed data in various classes and grades are included in Appendix A (Tables 1-4). It needs to be noted that in table 5 as well as in the following graph (graph 4) it was not possible to compare the data from Jarovnice and Košice-Šaca with the previous academic year.

Table 5: Summary of school attendance, 2003/04 academic year

| Primary school | Number of A total | Average number of U per student | Number of U total | Average number of U per student |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Jarovnice      | 4,943             | 154.5                           | 759               | 23.7                            |
| Košice         | 9,862             | 129.8                           | 3,637             | 47.9                            |
| Rudňany        | 13,269            | 101.3                           | 2,751             | 21.0                            |
| Smižany        | 27,831            | 183.1                           | 1,573             | 10.3                            |
| Total          | 55,905            | 143.0                           | 8,720             | 22.3                            |

A – Absences

U – Unexcused lessons

The basic assumption is that the key to a student's success in school is a regular attendance. Compared with the previous year, the average number of absences per student decreased by 163.5 as well as the overall average number of unexcused absences per student decreased by 24.4.

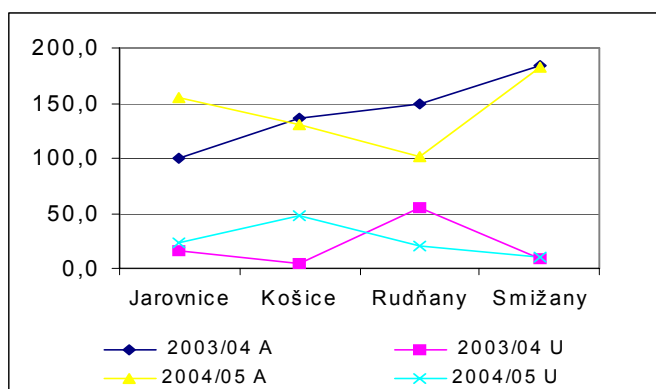
The most significant improvement in lowering absences in primary schools participating in project REI was recorded in Rudňany. Where in the previous academic year the lowest average of absences in various classes was above 130.1 in the current academic year it is 76. Moreover, the average of absences per student decreased significantly in each grade.

In the current academic year, the number of unexcused absences decreased significantly – by half (from 54.9 to 21). It is safe to assume that there is a correlation between school attendance rate and success rate. One piece of evidence to this hypothesis is the fact that the students in this primary school (Rudňany) improved their grade point average (from 3.3 to 3.16).

The reason for an increased attendance rate of students to the Rudňany primary school can be found in the financial support for families on social security payments (the majority), a contribution toward transportation, both of which are based also on the child's attendance of classes and free school lunch that in the majority of cases is the only daily meal for the student some days after the payment of social security payments to parents. The increased attendance rate is also caused by a significantly improved cooperation between class teachers and families (see Part IV.4.2., Table 18).

The following graph shows the average number of missed classes and unexcused absences in the participating schools during academic years 2003/04 and 2004/05.

Graph 4: Comparison of average number of missed classes and unexcused absences per student (academic years 2003/04 and 2004/05)



A – Absences  
U – Unexcused lessons

The Smižany primary school is the only school participating in project REI with all grades from 1 to 9. The overall number of missed lessons at this school decreased from 29,991 to 27,831 and the average of missed classes per student decreased by one class. The number of classes missed without a valid excuse increased in grade 8.

## IV.2. Pre-school education

The systematic work with children of pre-school age continued – it is an important prerequisite for the children’s successful integration into primary schools.

In Smižany, a cooperation and common activities are developing between this Roma kindergarten and a non-Roma kindergarten – the goal of which is intercultural education and a better socialization of children amongst each other.

In Rudňany, the fact that this project helped to overcome barriers between Roma communities needs to be highlighted. In the kindergarten, there are now children from both Pastoracke and 5RP11.

In Košice-Šaca, the Roma children were integrated in a kindergarten at the beginning of the school year but towards the second semester ceased to attend classes.

In the Jarovnice kindergarten, there was a class attended solely by Roma children but during the school year teachers provided opportunities for mixed groups – therefore children were integrated. Apart from this, a pre-school education was also provided for Roma children in the community center of a Roma settlement – this education was possible through the work 39 volunteers in families.

### IV.2.1. Kindergarten teachers’ opinion

Again this academic year we interviewed 11 teachers in kindergartens. The majority of these teacher have many years of experience working with Roma children. Only one teacher worked with Roma children for the first year and one teacher for two years, the rest of them between two and 22 years. We will present facts that changed in comparison with the previous academic year.

In comparison with the previous academic year, the acknowledgement among teachers that social and cognitive development of a child is an **indicator of success of the teacher’s work increased** (10 answers). Among answers were also the acceptance of hygienic rules

(3 answers), **knowledge of the Roma culture and its use in the educational process and cooperation with the family.**

The teachers considered language barrier to be the **biggest failure** (3 answers), then child's egoism (2 answers) and low persistence level in learning (2). One teacher considers the fact that there are no opportunities for educating children starting with the age of three a personal failure.

In comparison with the previous year the number of teachers that see the disadvantage of **opening special Roma classes** (or kindergartens) in their particular context **increased**. The reason for this is the fact that children get to know each other and feel better together (8 answers). **Among the disadvantages teachers listed the fact that children do not have the chance to hear and see other language, communication and behaviour patterns.**

Teachers consider **prejudice and mistrust** between Roma and non-Roma parents to be the most important factors hindering the integration of Roma and non-Roma children in the kindergarten (aside from the fact that the kindergartens in Rudňany and Smižany are neighboring the Roma settlement).

Cooperation with Roma activists remained at the same level in kindergartens. A **positive change** was seen in the teachers' opinions about the work of Roma teacher's assistants. One teacher did not answer but none answered that they would not like to work with such an assistant. Teachers see the role of a Roma assistant not only in enabling communication with children who do not speak Slovak (4 answers) but mainly in cooperation in various activities (7 answers) and cooperation with families (6).

The knowledge of legislation about the existence of this position has improved – 7 out of 11 teachers know the law and two consider it good.

#### IV.2.2. Children's transition into primary schools

The goal of this project component is to support the integration of Roma children in school.

We investigated whether and how many children that attended primary school and reached the primary school age will be registered in integrated primary school classes in academic year 2005/06.

In **Smižany**, 28 children will attend an integrated Grade 1 and starting on September 1 2005, another 20 children already attending primary school will join the class.

In **Rudňany**, 3 children will be integrated in Grade 1, in higher grades, another 17 Roma students will be integrated.

In **Košice-Šaca**, 10 children will be integrated in Grade 1 and another 5 children thus far attending Roma-only classes will be transferred into regular classes starting on September 1, 2005.

In **Jarovnice**, the parents of Roma students preferred to enroll their children in the Roma primary school.

In **Smižany**, 20 children that attended REI project kindergarten will be integrated into Grade 1 and the number of children integrated (from REI kindergarten) in Grade 1 of the catholic school increased from 7 to 8. Moreover, at the beginning of the academic year, an additional 20 students will be transferred into integrated classes. It is positive that while in the 2003/04 academic year 12 children were integrated in Grade 1, in the academic year 2005/06 it will be 28 students, where 8 of these will attend the catholic school that until now admitted Roma student very rarely.

In Jarovnice, the situation is peculiar because of the fact that in this town, a primary school only for Roma students is in existence. Despite the efforts of the local coordinator and Roma

volunteers, Roma parents enrolled their children in the Roma primary school even though some of them had originally decided to integrate their children in the non-Roma primary school. The progress in this kindergarten was achieved through the fact that although at the beginning of the academic year one Roma class was created, the teachers of classes organized daily activities of children (under the influence of the REI project) in such way that both the Roma and the non-Roma class were mixed and started with integration.

Despite the fact that in the second semester Roma children stopped attending kindergarten due to financial reasons, 10 of them will be integrated into primary school Grade 1 in **Košice-Šaca**.

In **Rudňany**, three children will be integrated in Grade 1, yet the possibility of transferring other students into non-Roma classes will have to be reevaluated in this community.

### ***IV.3. Primary school***

**The main goal of the project on primary school level is to improve the academic performance of Roma students and support the desegregation of these students in schools. School attendance and performance of students participating in the project are stated in part IV.1.**

#### **IV.3.1. Educational staff opinions**

##### **IV.3.1.1. Roma teacher's assistant responsibilities**

We consider the **work of Roma teacher's assistants** to be an important supporting factor of Roma children's learning in school. By means of an interview we tried to find out how the opinions of teachers on the work of the assistant changed.

**The research sample for this part of the research was composed of 46 teachers and 11 Roma teacher's assistants (including assistants in kindergartens).** Of these, 35 teachers cooperate or had in the past cooperated with a Roma teacher's assistant. 11 teachers had not yet had a working relationship with a Roma teacher's assistant and their answers were therefore hypothetical.

Considering the size of the research sample we show only summary answers, not according to town but according to whether the respondent has or does not have experience working with a Roma teacher's assistant.

**A teacher's idea about the main work activities of a Roma teacher's assistant can in a significant way influence his or her expectation of their relationship.** This was an open-ended question and thus we divided the answers to it into four categories, as we did in the first part of the project. The first part consists of *activities of assistant towards the students* (mentoring, translation into Roma language, afternoon activities with students, teaching students rules of hygiene, assistance with homework, accompanying students to and from school etc.). The second category is comprised of *activities of the assistant toward the family and community* (visits to families, interesting parents into cooperation with school, cooperation with the community, health-related work among parents etc). The third category consists of *activities with the teacher – teaching and school* (preparation of study aids, work during classroom activities, supervision during breaks, preparation of programs etc.) In the fourth, *other*, category belong those answers that are not related to any of the above categories – for instance solving problems, being a role model for students in life and good behaviour. A summary of answers is provided in Table 1 (Appendix B) together with the answers of the Roma teacher's assistants (11 answers).

In comparison with the previous year we can summarize that there had been a positive change in the idea about the activities of the Roma teacher's assistants in various groups. In

particular, expectations toward the work with families and active involvement of the assistant in the educational process were strengthened.

Table 2 in Appendix B shows the **main activities of assistants** during the second year of the project.

It is positive that the **main area of work of a Roma teacher's assistant lies in his or her involvement in the educational process**, mentoring and assisting the students in overcoming their language barrier. The assistants themselves are better aware of their role in the relationship to the community.

Table 3 (Appendix B) shows an overview of activities that, according to the teachers, the teacher's assistants should be performing, or should be paying more attention to.

„I am studying“, „Work with another kindergarten“ are included among the answers of the assistants.

The majority of teacher respondents (27) feels that the assistant should spend more time on his or her work and cooperation with families of students; 11 thinks it would be nice for the teacher's assistant to spend more time on aiding students with homework and two think that assistants should study and gain higher qualifications for the educational work they perform. Three Roma teacher's assistants also responded that they should study further (4).

Table 4 of Appendix B shows what is the most important prerequisite of an assistant's work – answers both by teachers and teacher's assistants. **Ability to work with parents and community is seen as the most important(15), followed by the ability to work with students (11) and cooperate with teachers (8).**

In comparison with the previous year, the level of understanding of the cooperation between a Roma teacher's assistant and the teacher grew. Answers categorized in „other“ increased – integration of Roma students and activities of a school children's club. Two respondents answered the question of cooperation with families with the need to convince parents about the role of education.

A change of opinion about **in what do assistants and teachers see limitations that prevent assistants from doing more for the students** and what could help them do their work more effectively can be seen in Table 5 of Appendix B.

Among the category „Other“ were included teacher's answers such as cooperation during extra-curricular trips, work with the class teacher, more influence of the town council, and preparation for teaching lessons. From among the answers of teacher's assistants are: more assistants needed in schools and the interest level of assistant to continue with this work.

„Other“ comments and recommendations were not given by 16 teachers, suggestions were not presented by 15 teachers and 4 Roma teacher's assistants. From among the answers, some are: financial compensation of Roma assistants, future perspective and employment stability for Roma assistants, help in their further education, being able to employ an assistant already with 5 Roma students in a class, education of Roma assistants, and broaden the work of assistants to grades on second level of primary schools (Grade 5-9).

#### IV.3.1.2. Teacher opinions

Teachers are considered the main initiators of changes in the work of schools. With the help of a questionnaire already used in the academic year 2003/04 by the REI project we wanted to find out the opinions of teachers and the changes that happened during their involvement in the project.

*Research sample characteristics*

49 teachers were the sample of this research. Considering the unbalanced distribution of teachers across the school locations (based from the number of classes participating in the project), we do not list the results across geographic locations but rather just a summary for the entire sample.

*Teachers' qualification*

Most of the teachers participating in the project are seasoned, qualified professionals.

Table 6: Teaching experience of the teachers in project schools

| Length of teaching career in project school | Less than one year | One to five years | Six to 11 years | More than 11 years |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Number of teachers                          | 1                  | 6                 | 12              | 30                 |

Table 7: General teaching practice of the teachers participating in the project

| Length of teaching career | Less than five year | Six to 10 years | Eleven to 20 years | More than 20 years |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Number of teachers        | 6                   | 8               | 18                 | 17                 |

From the viewpoint of qualifications for their job, eight teachers have high school education and the rest has university education on Master's level. Two have education in special pedagogy.

During the academic year 2004/04, 37 teachers used the Step by step methodology, 10 teachers did not use it and two did not answer the question. Those teachers not using the Step by step methodology were mainly teachers of second primary school level (Grades 5-9).

*Results*

While describing their classes, teachers of integrated classes used descriptions such as: varied; with skilled and less skilled students; such that those student not having attended kindergarten prior to starting primary school have to be taught everything, including the rules of hygiene. Teachers point out to the fact that students from different family backgrounds get into arguments. They also stress that students need support, love, attention, direction and each student has his or her stronger and weaker sides. Teachers themselves suggest to transfer some students into integrated classrooms.

In general, the descriptions of classes did not vary much, 24 teachers of integrated classes consider these in effect regular classes.

Some teachers said that their class is problematic because of both performance and behaviour of students, that girls are slightly calmer and have better results than boys. Moreover, the comment that the class is not homogenic, very lively, students do not help each other and boys are rude and vulgar, etc.

Concerning the needs of students, during this academic year teachers also mentioned the need for an individualized approach toward students in classes, the need to work according to an individualized educational plan, and also the students' need of safety, peaceful environment, the feeling of togetherness, love, praise and freely selected activities.

The research intended to investigate how teachers fulfill the needs of students in their classrooms. The distribution of answers is shown in Table 8. The percentage points are calculated from the total number of answers.

Table 8: Means of meeting students' educational needs

| Means   | 2003/04 |       | 2004/05 |       |
|---|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|   | N       | %     | N       | %     |
| Frequent communication with students                          | 19      | 14.3  | 21      | 15.6  |
| Individualized approach to students                           | 18      | 13.5  | 15      | 11.1  |
| Positive and objective evaluation                             | 14      | 10.4  | 8       | 5.9   |
| Using team-building activities                                | 13      | 9.8   | -       | -     |
| Meeting students' physical needs                              | 9       | 6.8   | 6       | 4.4   |
| Personal contact and interest in students                     | 8       | 6.0   | 3       | 2.2   |
| Work in groups and pairs                                      | 7       | 5.3   | 12      | 8.9   |
| Free time activities and games                                | 7       | 5.3   | 7       | 5.2   |
| Development of students' personal abilities                   | 7       | 5.3   | 15      | 11.1  |
| Morning meetings  | 6       | 4.5   | 9       | 6.7   |
| Tutoring  | 6       | 4.5   | 2       | 1.5   |
| Cooperation with families                                     | 5       | 3.8   | 6       | 4.4   |
| Creation of teaching materials                                | 3       | 2.2   | -       | -     |
| Motivation and atmosphere in the classroom                    | -       | -     | 12      | 8.9   |
| Special hour with students to resolve any problems/complaints | -       | -     | 5       | 3.7   |
| Other   | 11      | 8.3   | 14      | 10.4  |
| Total   | 133     | 100.0 | 135     | 100.0 |

The category „Other“ contains answers such as: help of Roma teacher's assistant, repetition of explanations, balancing a student's failure in one subject with better performance in a different subject, enabling students to choose activities, learning about the Roma culture and their lifestyle, and attempt to empathize with child problems and help them resolve these.

As the following table shows, teachers **most frequently** use communication and individualized approach. In comparison with the previous academic year, there is a significant increase in the **development of characteristic aptitudes of students, group work, the creation of a conducive atmosphere and motivation of students.**

The **most effective activities** helping students learn are, according to teachers: individualized and differentiated approach to teaching, diacritical games, the use of tactile study aids, books – those aids that make the pillars of the Step by step methodology (Table 9).

Table 9: Activities most effective in making students' learning easier

| Activity                                       | 2003/04 |       | 2004/05 |       |
|--|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|  | N       | %     | N       | %     |
| Use of teaching materials, books               | 24      | 19.6  | 13      | 9.9   |
| Use of case studies                            | 11      | 9.0   | 2       | 1.5   |
| Individualized approach                        | 11      | 9.0   | 18      | 13.8  |
| Motivational evaluation                        | 9       | 7.4   | 10      | 7.6   |
| Work in groups and pairs                       | 9       | 7.4   | 15      | 11.6  |
| Use of different activities, change            | 9       | 7.4   | -       | -     |
| Communicating toward students' understanding   | 9       | 7.4   | 6       | 4.6   |
| Frequent repetition                            | 8       | 6.5   | 13      | 9.9   |
| Positive evaluation                            | 5       | 4.1   | -       | -     |
| Morning „circle“                               | 4       | 3.3   | 4       | 3.0   |
| Conversation and active listening              | 3       | 2.5   | 3       | 2.3   |
| Stressing students' personal talents           | 3       | 2.5   | 4       | 3.0   |
| Didactical games                               | 3       | 2.5   | 13      | 9.9   |
| Testing and checking                           | -       | -     | 7       | 5.3   |
| Projects                                       | -       | -     | 5       | 3.8   |
| Activity centers (extra-curricular activities) | -       | -     | 3       | 2.3   |
| Good family situation                          | 2       | 1.6   | 3       | 2.3   |
| Other  | 11      | 9.0   | 12      | 9.2   |
| No response                                    | 1       | 0.8   | -       | -     |
| Total  | 122     | 100.0 | 131     | 100.0 |

Category „Other“ contains activities such as: cooperation with other classes during some lessons, creation of work diaries, exhibition of work of all students, gradual teaching, singing of popular songs, preparation exercises etc.

Furthermore, we asked about what the teacher respondents liked most and least about their work. An overview of their answers is presented in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Factors teachers like about their work

| Best liked                                | 2003/04 |       | Best liked                                | 2004/05 |       |
|---|---------|-------|---|---------|-------|
|   | N       | %     |   | N       | %     |
| Students' characteristics and skills      | 35      | 36.7  | Students' characteristics and skills      | 17      | 23.3  |
| Students' activities and interests        | 18      | 18.9  | Students' activities and interests        | 29      | 39.7  |
| Students' academic performance            | 13      | 13.7  | Students' academic performance            | 11      | 15.1  |
| Students' joy from learning               | 7       | 7.4   | Students' joy from learning               | 3       | 4.1   |
| Students' good relationship with teachers | 5       | 5.3   | Students' good relationship with teachers | 0       | 0.0   |
| Good relationships among students         | 5       | 5.3   | Good relationships among students         | 1       | 1.3   |
| Children and working for children         | 4       | 4.2   | Children and working for children         | 8       | 11.0  |
| Students' feeling of competence           | 2       | 2.1   | Students' feeling of competence           | 0       | 0.0   |
| Other                                     | 5       | 5.3   | Other                                     | 4       | 5.5   |
| No response                               | 1       | 1.1   | No response                               | 0       | 0.0   |
| Total                                     | 95      | 100.0 | Total                                     | 73      | 100.0 |

Teachers most like about their work the students themselves, the students' talents, abilities, activities, interests, and achieved results (78.1% answered in this year as opposed to 69.3% in year 2004). There was a significant increase in the assessment of the interests and activities of students, which is obviously the result of the change in educational approach of teachers under the influence of their participation in the project.

Among „Other“ factors that teachers like most about their work are: the subject he or she is teaching, satisfactory provision of study aids, large and small merry-go-round, methodology

Step by Step, lower number of students in the classroom enabling a more individualized approach etc.

On the other hand, among factors that cause teachers to dislike their work are: unsatisfactory level of hygiene among students, too much administrative work, the position of a teacher in the society, weak feedback, students not speaking the Slovak language and are unable to express their wishes and needs, lack of time for communication and repetition of learning material explanations.

Table 11: Factors teachers dislike about their work

| Least liked                            | 2003/04 |       | Least liked                            | 2004/05 |       |
|--|---------|-------|--|---------|-------|
|  | N       | %     |  | N       | %     |
| Students' disinterest                  | 18      | 19.5  | Students' disinterest                  | 13      | 20.3  |
| Students' negative characteristics     | 16      | 17.2  | Students' negative characteristics     | 5       | 7.8   |
| Disturbing during lessons              | 15      | 16.1  | Disturbing during lessons              | 13      | 20.3  |
| Parents' disinterest                   | 14      | 15.1  | Parents' disinterest                   | 12      | 18.7  |
| Students are hungry, messy and nervous | 6       | 6.4   | Students are hungry, messy and nervous | -       | -     |
| Insufficient classroom equipment       | 3       | 3.2   | Insufficient classroom equipment       | 1       | 1.6   |
| Students' noncompletion of tasks       | 3       | 3.2   | Students' noncompletion of tasks       | 3       | 4.7   |
| Frequent school absence                | 2       | 2.1   | Frequent school absence                | -       | -     |
| Unsatisfactory performance of students | 0       | 0     | Unsatisfactory performance of students | 4       | 6.3   |
| Other                                  | 13      | 14.0  | Other                                  | 10      | 15.6  |
| No response                            | 3       | 3.2   | No response                            | 3       | 4.7   |
| Total                                  | 93      | 100.0 | Total                                  | 64      | 100.0 |

It is apparent from the above-mentioned table that in comparison with the academic year 2003/04 the teachers' attitudes towards students were changed. For instance, there was a significant decrease in the number of teachers who mentioned negative characteristics of students (from 17.2 % in academic year 2003/04 to 7.8 % in academic year 2004/05). No one of the teacher this year used the words „hungry“, „nervous“, or „messy“ to describe students.

Teachers most like the students' activity and interest about their job – where the largest shift occurred as compared with the previous academic year. At the same time, teachers are sensitive to students' disinterest and disturbance during lessons.

In this academic year as well, the majority of teachers taught lessons according to the regular curriculum (30) and 18 taught regular curriculum with aspects of individual needs of students, one did not answer the question.

In the next section we will deal with activities newly introduced by teachers.

Teachers listed the following among new teaching techniques helping students learn more effectively: first and foremost group and cooperative teaching, work in couples. The increase in use of activity-based teaching methods is also significant. Newly mentioned activities are working with books and more importantly reading with understanding and dialogue. A more detailed overview is available in Table 12.

Table 12: Activities most effective in assisting with students' learning

| Activity                                       | 2003/04 |       | 2004/05 |       |
|--|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|  | N       | %     | N       | %     |
| Group, cooperative and pair work               | 23      | 25.8  | 24      | 20.1  |
| Activity-based teaching methods                | 15      | 16.9  | 22      | 18.4  |
| Morning meetings                               | 10      | 11.2  | 13      | 11.0  |
| Didactical games                               | 7       | 7.9   | 2       | 1.6   |
| Theme-based teaching                           | 5       | 5.6   | 5       | 4.2   |
| Individual student work                        | 5       | 5.6   | -       | -     |
| Individualized approach                        | 3       | 3.4   | 3       | 2.5   |
| Motivation                                     | 3       | 3.4   | 4       | 3.4   |
| Dialogue                                       | -       | -     | 8       | 6.8   |
| Work with the book, reading with understanding | -       | -     | 9       | 7.6   |
| Other  | 8       | 9.0   | 25      | 21.0  |
| No response                                    | 10      | 11.2  | 4       | 3.4   |
| Total  | 89      | 100.0 | 119     | 100.0 |

Answering the question about which activities teachers do not consider effective in aiding students, 33 teachers did not answer and the rest stated: memorization (4), stereotypes and classical teaching methods (4), difficult assignments (2), homework (1), group work (2), individual work (3), but also tutoring of a large group of students and verbal testing without providing a grade, etc. **This data support the conclusion that teachers realize the need of their own role in the changes in their educational work. We can assume that gradually, ineffective approaches will be substituted by such approaches that the teachers consider effective and helping students in their studies.**

The question concerning which activities teachers would like to use in their teaching of project classes was answered with: work with educational programs and computers, trips and excursions, and individual work. **The fact that teachers would like to make more times to use computers in their work in classrooms needs to be highlighted. This can be considered to be a reflection of a better preparation of teachers and of better material equipment of the schools participating in the project. Likewise, teachers understand the importance of the students' understanding of the surroundings and would like to include day trips and excursions into the curriculum.**

Among „Others“ are: long-term school trips, integration of reading and writing lessons, swimming lessons, an Open Door Day. The distribution of answers is shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Activities teachers would like to use with classes

| Activity   | 2003/04 |       | 2004/05 |       |
|--|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|  | N       | %     | N       | %     |
| Cooperation with families                            | 7       | 11.4  | 1       | 1.5   |
| Project-based teaching                               | 6       | 9.7   | 3       | 4.5   |
| Work with technology and PCs                         | 6       | 9.7   | 11      | 16.8  |
| Group work   | 3       | 4.8   | 3       | 4.5   |
| Cooperation with teacher's assistant                 | 3       | 4.8   | 2       | 3.0   |
| Didactical games                                     | 3       | 4.8   | 1       | 1.5   |
| Field trips and excursions                           | 3       | 4.8   | 9       | 13.6  |
| Morning „circle“                                     | 2       | 3.2   | 2       | 3.0   |
| Journals   | 2       | 3.2   | -       | -     |
| Portfolios   | 2       | 3.2   | -       | -     |
| Teaching according to the „Step-by-Step“ methodology | 2       | 3.2   | 6       | 9.0   |
| Individual student work                              | -       | -     | 4       | 6.0   |
| Other  | 8       | 13.0  | 13      | 19.8  |
| No response  | 15      | 24.2  | 11      | 16.8  |
| Other  | 62      | 100.0 | 66      | 100.0 |

The influence of comprehensive approaches is apparent from this overview.

During this academic year, 41 teachers did not answer the question about which activities they would not like to use. Two respondents would not like to use mechanical teaching, joining of desks (2), homework assignments, degrading of students, individualized approach and role plays (one respondent each).

A similarly high number of respondents did not respond to the question which activities they would need help implementing (26 teachers). Four stated they would need help implementing the Step by Step methodology, five in cooperation with families, four with trips and excursions, two with swimming lessons, work with computers, Roma language vocabulary, subject relations and one respondent each with group work, projects, work with children’s books and with drinking regime.

Table 14: School activities students like

| Activity                        | 2003/04 |       | 2004/05 |       |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|                                 | N       | %     | N       | %     |
| Group work                      | 15      | 16.3  | 17      | 18.8  |
| Morning meetings                | 14      | 15.2  | 10      | 11.1  |
| Motivational evaluation         | 10      | 10.9  | -       | -     |
| Games and variety of activities | 7       | 7.6   | 15      | 16.7  |
| Work with books                 | 6       | 6.5   | 1       | 1.1   |
| Conversations                   | 5       | 5.4   | 6       | 6.7   |
| Classroom organization          | 5       | 5.4   | 4       | 4.4   |
| Afternoon activities            | 5       | 5.4   | -       | -     |
| Work with computers             | 3       | 3.3   | 6       | 6.7   |
| Projects                        | 2       | 2.2   | 6       | 6.7   |
| Video                           | -       | -     | 6       | 6.7   |
| Other                           | 11      | 12.0  | 12      | 13.3  |
| No response                     | 9       | 9.8   | 7       | 7.8   |
| Other                           | 92      | 100.0 | 90      | 100.0 |

Among the category „Other“ are answers such as: everything that the teacher uses, individualized approach, joining of theory and practice, singing, going to theatre performances, exercise books and critical thinking.

This year’s answers also confirmed the fact that students positively react to group lessons, games, varying of activities, usage of videos, and working on projects.

In the next section, a comparison of the development of the needs of teachers is presented. Among „Other“ are included answers such as: methods and forms of teaching Roma students (1), teaching through games (1), teaching on the basis of various intelligence types (1), computers (1), foreign language (1), Roma mentality (1), regional history (1), and joint seminars with Roma parents (1). The results are presented in Tables 15-18.

Table 15: Teachers' needs in regard to seminars

| Seminar subject   | 2003/04 |       | 2004/05 |       |
|---|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|   | N       | %     | N       | %     |
| Real-life samples and lesson models   | 10      | 20.5  | 10      | 21.3  |
| „Step-by-Step“ methodology  | 6       | 12.2  | 4       | 8.5   |
| Special pedagogy – work with Roma students and students with learning and behavioral disabilities | 6       | 12.2  | 3       | 6.4   |
| Child psychology  | 3       | 6.1   | 2       | 4.3   |
| Project creation  | 1       | 2.0   | -       | -     |
| Cooperation with families   | -       | -     | 3       | 6.4   |
| No response   | 23      | 47.0  | 25      | 53.1  |
| Total   | 49      | 100.0 | 47      | 100.0 |

Concerning materials needed for teachers to increase their effectiveness in this project, they name for example study aids, educational technology and study accessories for students (26 respondents), educational materials, and samples of preparation and work plans. We positively value the realization of the need to better understand the Roma culture (for more details please see Table 16). Under the „other“ category, games, literature for children and all materials are listed.

Table 16: Teachers' material needs

| Material  | 2003/2004 |       | 2004/2005 |       |
|---|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
|   | N         | %     | N         | %     |
| Teaching materials, didactical technology and school supplies | 22        | 32.3  | 26        | 32.2  |
| Methodological materials                                      | 10        | 14.8  | 15        | 18.6  |
| Work plans  | 9         | 13.2  | -         | -     |
| Lesson samples  | 3         | 4.4   | 5         | 6.2   |
| Recordings of Roma fairy-tales and stories                    | 3         | 4.4   | 12        | 14.8  |
| Work methodology for Roma students                            | 2         | 2.9   | 4         | 4.9   |
| Other   | 7         | 10.3  | 8         | 9.9   |
| No response   | 12        | 17.7  | 11        | 13.6  |
| Total   | 68        | 100.0 | 81        | 100.0 |

40 respondents did not answer the question whether they feel the need for particular information about the Roma culture in order to increase the quality of their work in the scope of the project. Particular needs of teachers in the real of learning about the Roma culture are listed in Table 17.

Table 17: Need for information about Roma culture

| Information about Roma culture         | 2003/04 | 2004/05 |
|--|---------|---------|
|  | N       | N       |
| Roma traditions and history            | 5       | 4       |
| Roma families, stories and fairy-tales | 3       | 5       |
| Films                                  | 3       | 3       |
| Other                                  | 4       | 4       |
| No response                            | 32      | 40      |

In the category „other“ are listed answers such as: a compilation of Roma songs, general information and one teacher answered that Roma people are not interested in a cooperation. The fact that the need for information about Roma culture had not increased could be caused by teachers having received information about this aspect in their preparation seminar. **The content of lectures attended by teachers participating in the project was, among others, Roma culture, multicultural education and education toward social justice – which met the needs of teachers in this area to a significant degree.**

Teachers would need to know better how to convince parents to more frequently take part in the educational process and pay attention to the school work of their children in order to increase the quality of their work with families. Also, teachers would like to know how to successfully organize common activities, community activities and trips with parents. The results are listed in Table 18.

Table 18: Need for strategies to involve Roma families

| Strategy of Roma family involvement                 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 |
|---|---------|---------|
|   | N       | N       |
| Parent participation in lessons, help with homework | 14      | 21      |
| Common activities                                   | 7       | 17      |
| Ways of working with Roma families                  | 5       | 4       |
| PTA meetings  | 3       | -       |
| Hygiene education                                   | 3       | -       |
| Other   | 4       | 11      |
| No response   | 20      | 11      |

In category „other“ are answers such as convincing the parents about the future of their children being in the parents' hands, aspects of financial remuneration of teachers, means to involve the Roma teacher's assistant in the cooperation with the student's family and the fact that this issue is the responsibility of the Slovak government.

Amount other suggestions were, for example, finding money for long-term class trips, the presence of parents during lessons, the need to re-educate parents and financial compensation of teachers. 44 teachers did not respond to the last part – about other suggestions.

At the end of the questionnaire, teachers had the chance to express their suggestions and opinions about how the performance level of Roma students can be improved. The number of teachers who did not answer decreased rapidly, from 22 to 13 which confirms that teachers thought more about the issues of education of Roma children in this academic year than in the previous.

Answers provided were concentrated in the following areas:

- cooperation with families: teachers most frequently highlighted the importance of cooperation with parents, the need to educate parents to care and help their children with homework assignments, teaching parents about responsibility for their children, importance of regular attendance of classes (40 answers),
- all-day educational system: students should attend school children clubs where they would not only prepare for classes but also develop their interests and skills (8),
- system of the school: there should be a Roma teacher's assistant in each class in Level 1 (Grades 1-4) of primary school (2 answers), shortening of lesson duration from 45 minutes to 30-35 minutes (1), organization of excursions (1), summer camps (1), giving Roma students the feeling that they are just like everyone else – and have rights and responsibilities (1), require participation of both Roma teacher's assistants and students in the creation of study aids and decoration of the classroom (1), pay more attention to mentoring (2), educational interview (1), and professional orientation (1),
- other: teachers highlighted the importance of parents' employment and consequent social security of the family (2), without a perspective for the future, students are not motivated to study (1), and also the opinion that work with Roma students is successful up to Grade

7 ( teacher not having any problems working with Roma students, having a positive relationship with them).

#### IV.3.1.3. Opinions of schools' head staff

Seven staff members expressed their opinion about the project, four of them being headmasters and three assistant headmasters. Whereas in the previous year they mostly saw the as **advantages** of the project in material and financial assistance, during the current year they evaluated the advantages being in mostly **communication and learning and understanding a different culture (6)**, which is a very important change under the influence of the project. Two value the material supplies for classes and one mentions each interesting methods and forms of work, education of teachers and the fact that everyone has a chance for desegregation.

This group of respondents sees **disadvantages** of this project in that the majority of the population is against it (3). Two do not see any disadvantages and one is concerned with the fact that the initiative for the project is not stemming from schools.

Respondents **like** the project's support of the educational process – children like going to school, also a decrease in tension between two Roma communities and their participation in cooperation, and integration and cooperation with families. They **dislike** that the project is not concerned about non-Roma students in dire social situations and that Roma children do not make satisfactory use of this opportunity. Also, one mentions that the initiative comes from „above“. Three respondents did not provide an answer.

From the perspective of meeting the student's needs, respondents feel that the project meets the needs of children/student (4), two did not answer and one thinks that the unsatisfactory cooperation of families lowers the effect of the project and that other children should also attend kindergarten.

The needs of students, according to this group, can be better met through adapting the lesson content (3), lower the number of students per class (2), increase the participation of parents (3), cooperation with a medical doctor – a psychologist (2) and through group work (1).

The next question investigated into the level of involvement between the school and the community, to what degree is the community a part of the school and vice versa. Representatives of the school are still convinced that the community does not have a particularly high interest level in cooperating with the school and in education of their children, there are only some individuals (5 answers), they invite parents to visit the school (2), employ Roma teacher's assistant and other Roma, the school building is in the community, adaptation of the student to other environment (1), and the school building also serves for women's and youth activities. They feel that school compensates for a malign environment at home and two did not answer.

Respondents think that among the signs of an ideal school should be: **openness and cooperation of school and family** (5) which means a significant **positive** change in comparison with the previous year. Next, finances (3 answers), level of qualification and dedication of teachers about students and learning (3), student hygiene (1), one respondent answered „we have already reached it“ and one did not answer.

At the conclusion of the questionnaire, respondents could list their suggestions. Four did not answer and others mentioned: financing (3), increasing the level of understanding among teachers and students, **implement the experience from this project in the educational reform and one says thank you for the project.**

#### IV.4. Parent involvement

The contact of parents with school is either direct or indirect, and occurs in various shapes and forms on an everyday basis. Caring parents everyday require an update about the results their child is achieving in school.

The level of involvement of Roma parents and teachers in the cooperation with kindergartens and primary schools participating in project REI was observed through various points of contact: visits of classes, meetings with teachers, participation in PTA meetings and other (specified by teachers) meetings.

##### IV.4.1. Parent involvement in kindergartens

The following table provides an overview of meetings between parents and teachers of kindergartens.

Table 19: An average number of contact per child in 2004/05 academic year

| Kindergarten | Visited classroom | Met with teacher | Attended group parent meeting | Other | Total |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Jarovnice    | 21.4              | Daily            | 2.9                           | 1.0   | 25.3  |
| Rudňany      | 20.0              | Often            | 3.1                           | 1.6   | 24.6  |
| Smižany      | 3.5               | Regularly        | 4.7                           | 6.1   | 14.3  |

The total average number of contacts per child increased in comparison with the previous academic year in every kindergarten. In Jarovnice (in year 2003 it was 12.6) and Rudňany (in year 2003 it was 10.7, the number doubled). The number of visits of classes quadrupled in this year in Jarovnice and Rudňany. Meetings between the parent and teacher occurs on a daily basis through accompanying the child to and from the kindergarten, therefore this type of contact is not quantified in order not to diminish other recorded forms of contact between the parents and teachers.

„Other“ meetings occurred in all kindergartens, for example: parents accompanying children on day trips, visits to the library, shopping for candy for meetings, participation on various get-togethers (Mother’s Day, Christmas and Easter celebrations), help in ironing and alterations of children’s clothes and bedsheets, cleaning of the school surroundings and sandboxes, painting of lockers, visits in the family, in town or on the street.

##### IV.4.2. Parent involvement in primary schools

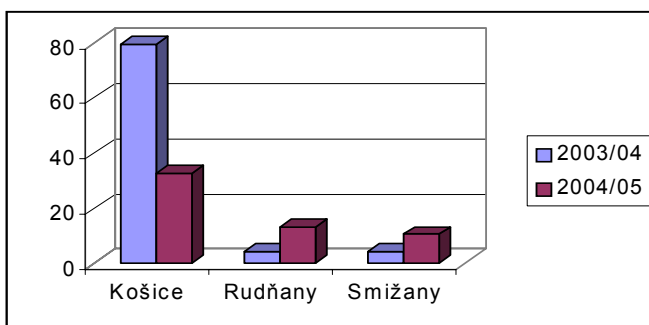
The following table provides an overview of meetings between parents and teachers of primary schools.

Table 20: An average number of contact per child in 2004/05 academic year

| Primary school | Grade           | Visited classroom | Met with teacher | Attended group parent meeting | Other | Total |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Košice-Šaca    | 0               | 8.3               | 25.2             | 2.2                           | 1.4   | 37.0  |
|                | 1 <sup>st</sup> | 16.8              | 16.2             | 2.5                           | 2.6   | 38.1  |
|                | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 4.5               | 10.4             | 2.9                           | 1.4   | 19.3  |
|                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 16.6              | 17.0             | 1.5                           | 1.6   | 36.7  |
| Rudňany        | 0               | 2.6               | 9.7              | 2.1                           | 5.9   | 20.3  |
|                | 1 <sup>st</sup> | 3.4               | 4.2              | 0.9                           | 2.9   | 11.5  |
|                | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 2.2               | 3.8              | 0.8                           | 2.6   | 9.4   |
|                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 1.1               | 1.5              | 0.3                           | 1.3   | 4.1   |
|                | 4 <sup>th</sup> | 2.4               | 9.7              | 0.5                           | 3.1   | 15.7  |
|                | 5 <sup>th</sup> | 0.5               | 1.6              | 0.6                           | 0.6   | 3.3   |
| Smižany        | 1 <sup>st</sup> | 16.8              | 14.3             | 2.1                           | 2.0   | 35.3  |
|                | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 5.7               | 7.3              | 2.1                           | 2.6   | 17.7  |
|                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 4.6               | 3.9              | 1.8                           | 2.2   | 12.5  |
|                | 4 <sup>th</sup> | 2.4               | 5.9              | 1.6                           | 0.6   | 10.6  |
|                | 5 <sup>th</sup> | 0.9               | 1.1              | 1.1                           | 0.0   | 3.1   |
|                | 6 <sup>th</sup> | 0.3               | 1.0              | 1.1                           | 0.0   | 2.3   |
|                | 7 <sup>th</sup> | 0.7               | 1.5              | 1.3                           | 0.5   | 4.0   |
|                | 8 <sup>th</sup> | 0.5               | 1.3              | 1.2                           | 0.0   | 2.9   |
|                | 9 <sup>th</sup> | 0.9               | 1.8              | 1.4                           | 0.0   | 4.2   |

The total average number of contacts per child increased in comparison with the previous academic year in every primary school grade. In Rudňany, this number increased from 4.4 in academic year 2003/04 to 11.4 in 2004/05 and in Smižany from 4 (2003/04) to 8.5 contacts in 2004/05. Whereas in Smižany Grades 5-9 parents did not visit the class at all last year or only met the teacher, during this academic year parents sought contact with the school more often (see following graph).

Graph 5: Comparison of overall average number of contacts per student (2003/04 and 2004/05)



Compared with the previous academic year, contacts between the school and family improved significantly:

- in parent visits of classes in every Grade in Rudňany and Smižany;
- in personal meetings of parents with teachers in Košice-Šaca, in every Grade in Rudňany and on Level 2 (Grades 5-9) of Smižany primary school;
- in attendance of PTA meetings in Košice-Šaca, Rudňany and Smižany.

„Other“ forms of contact mean visits of teachers in students' homes, chance meetings with parent in town, community or in stores and telephonic conversations.

The most intensive contacts were in Grades 0-4 (Level 1 of primary school) in all classes in all participating primary schools. This observation is apparent through the fact that the younger the child is, the more intensive the interest from the parents in his or her school results, and the level of cooperation with school is the same in Roma and non-Roma populations.

#### **IV.5. Parent opinions**

The aim of the questionnaire was to find out the opinions of parents about the class their child is attending, the attitude of the child towards the school, school attendance, implementing changes in schools and about success achievement of their child.

There were 11 open-ended questions contained in the questionnaire.

The data shown in Tables (Appendix C, D and E) are calculated based on the number of answers provided by parents and therefore are not always equal to the number of respondents.

##### **IV.5.1. Parent opinions (kindergarten children)**

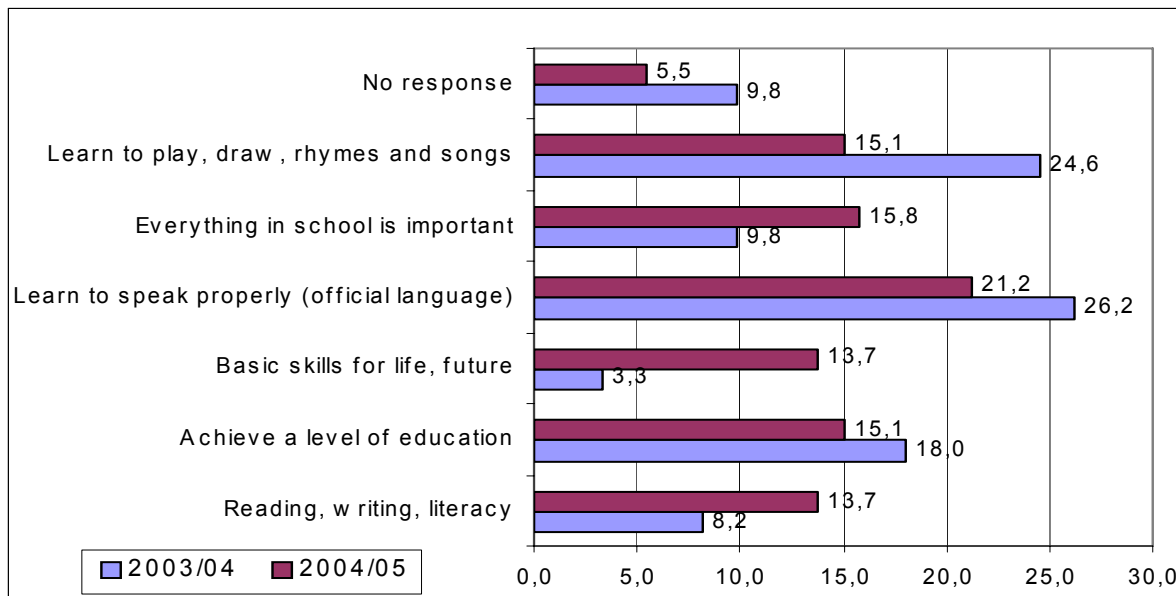
From the total number of children attending kindergarten – 178, 105 parents (59 %) answered. There was a significant level of interest in cooperation with school, also documented by Table 19 (section IV.4.1) as compared with the previous academic year (36.5 %) also apparent through filling out this questionnaire – an increase by 22.5 %.

A more detailed overview with summaries of parents' answers is in Appendix C (Tables 1-11).

An analysis and comparison of parents' answer from the two consecutive academic years shows the following most significant positive changes in the current year:

- more regular attendance in kindergarten (improvement by 12 %);
- in good environment, surroundings of kindergarten that children like (improvement by 12 %);
- in gaining knowledge and learning to speak Slovak (improvement by 10 %);
- in children's positive feeling about changes (improvement by 8 %) as well as by parents (improvement by 8 %);
- in all activities that take place in the kindergarten (improvement by 8 %);
- in gaining of basic skills that parents consider important for life and a better future of their child (improvement by 8 %).

Graph 6: What parents consider important in kindergartens ( %).



In both years, 99 % of parents have the **same opinion** about their **child liking kindergarten** and 77 % of parents **know about the changes happening** in the kindergarten. Some parents say: *„My daughter likes going to kindergarten, she comes home with a smile and without fear. She always learns something new, children receive warm meals which is important for them. A new park with a swing had been added. I consider it important that children can speak Slovak. It is important that my daughter learns it read, write and learns other things; that she successfully completes primary school and maybe even high school if she wants to, even university.“*

#### IV.5.2. Parent opinions (primary school students)

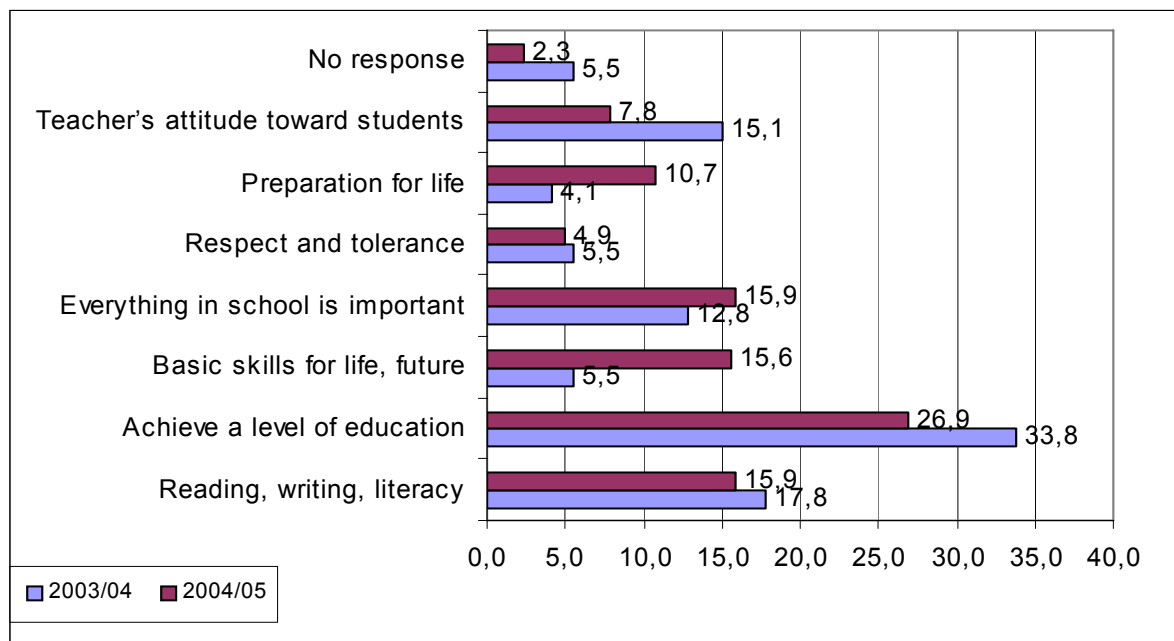
From the overall number of 359 Roma parents (not counting parents in Jarovnice), 291 answered the questionnaire. Therefore, the response rate as compared with the previous year increased from 70.1 % to 74.4 %.

An overview of parents' answers from each individual primary school is presented in Tables 1-11 of Appendix D. A more detailed encounter of answers is shown in Appendix E, Tables 1-11.

Most important changes, as compared to last year, occurred:

- in a more regular everyday attendance of students to school (improvement by 10 %);
- in an increased subjective value of school in a value hierarchy for parents for life and a good future for their children (improvement by 12 %);
- in student's opinion about school – likes attending school (improvement by 8 %);
- in parents' opinions about changes in school – child learns a lot in school (improvement by 8 %)
- in the importance of gaining basic skills for life and future (improvement by 10 %);
- in the need of the parent for his or her child to achieve good education and progress to the next Grade (improvement by 10 %).

Graph 7: What parents consider important in primary schools ( %).



#### IV.6. Student opinions

In order to find out the opinion of students about school, we used a questionnaire for Level 1 and Level 2 of primary schools. Overall, 316 students gave their opinion, 212 were from Level 1 and 104 from Level 2. Students in Grade 0 and in Jarovnice did not respond to this questionnaire.

##### IV.6.1. Student opinions – First primary school level (Grades 1-4)

Tables 1 through 8 in Appendix F show the opinions of students in Grades 1-4 of primary schools in Košice-Šaca, Rudňany and Smižany.

As the thing they like best in school 89.6 % of students replied that it is the use of various materials (study aids, computers). The second most favorite alternative was physical education lessons, spending time with their teacher (86.3 %) and art classes (83.5 %) – as shown in Table 1, Appendix F. 65 % of students would like to spend more time in physical education and arts classes.

More than half of the students enjoy writing lessons and mathematics (Table 1, Appendix F), but they would like to spend more time with each subject (Table 2, Appendix F). On the other hand, 42.9 % of students consider writing and 38 % mathematics to be very easy subjects (Table 4, Appendix F).

More than half of the students (53.5 %) answered the question what they dislike about school. The most frequently provided answer was fights and quarrels between children (35.1 %) and that students run around during breaks (25.4 %). Also, 22.5 % of students do not like the fact that some mothers do not care about their children, 17.3 % do not enjoy noise during lessons and 12.5 % untidy classroom environment.

The majority of students (82.5 %) feel the need to change the way students communicate with each other and 69.3 % would like to change the behaviour of students towards each other (Table 3, Appendix F).

Whereas more than half of the students play only with their friends in school, less than that state they play with everyone or with the majority of the students. Presumably under the influence of teachers, the number of students that do not want to play with anyone (3 %) decreased. In Rudňany, no student choiced this answer (Table 5, Appendix F).

The fact that the vast majority of students work with everyone else in their classroom is positive. One third of students prefer their own friends, and a very small number of students do not want to work with any other children (Table 6, Appendix F).

Similar positive statements can be derived from Tables 7 and 8 (Appendix F). The majority of students (76 %) like everything or most things in school; 79.7 % of students answered that they always or almost always like being in school. Negative evaluations in reference to school were apparent for only 1 % of students. In Smizany, no student expressed a negative evaluation of school.

#### IV.6.2. Student opinions – Second primary school level (Grades 5-9)

96.3 % of students returned the questionnaire from Grades 5-9 in primary schools in Košice-Šaca, Rudňany and Smižany. Their opinions are shown by Tables 1-5 in Appendix G.

One positive conclusion can be made from the fact that 45.2 % of students state that they are achieving good or even very good results in school (Table 1, Appendix G).

Students say they „always“ or „often“:

- more than 80 % of students consider good grades important;
- 80 % of students have trust toward their parents because they share with them their school results;
- three quarters of students consider it important to learn as much as possible in school;
- 72.1 % of students voice their opinions in school when they have something on their mind;
- 67.3 % of students claim their teachers expect them to do well in school;
- 66.3 % of students have the opportunity to define their own goals;
- more than 60 % of students consider their school to be clean, more than half are happy in school and almost 50 % of them likes attending their particular school (Table 2, Appendix G).

Three quarters of students say that teachers do not assign very easy tasks to them. This means that teachers have high expectations of their students which can be considered as positive motivation for students themselves (Table 2, Appendix G).

From among the choices provided of what students like best about their school, 67.3 % state it is friends they made, extra-curricular activities (32.7 %) and interesting things they do during lessons (29.8 %). One fifth of the students consider the school as a comfortable place with good teachers and employees (Table 3 in Appendix G).

Same as in the previous academic year, half of the students express the need to be treated more fairly in school – according to a quarter of students, classes should be more interesting, they should have the opportunity to express their opinions on things that concern them, and would welcome more extracurricular activities and clubs (Table 4, Appendix G).

When students were asked to evaluate their school, 45.2 % consider their school excellent and good, in Rudňany 84.2 % of students used this evaluation. For more than a third of students, school is average. No negative assessment of school was recorded in Rudňany (Table 5, Appendix G).

We assume that the overall positive development recorded will reflect in a further integration of students, in increasing the quality of students' work and in their overall attitude toward school, teachers and peer students.

#### **IV.7. Results of observations**

A positive trend was recorded in classes participating in the project during observations. Because the number of classes in each grade was not the same in the second semester, we cannot compare the information gathered. However, the positive change is apparent in the majority of classes when comparing the second semester to the first.

##### **IV.7.1. Kindergarten**

On the basis of a score in each area, we can conclude that the most significant change occurred in the Smižany kindergarten where three classes were observed and achieved the maximal score in each area (Table 1, Appendix H). **This proved the systematic work and active implementation of Roma culture in the life of the kindergarten.**

This score did not change significantly in the Jarovnice kindergarten, but the positive fact is that during the second semester, no inappropriate behaviour was observed during activities of Roma and non-Roma children outside of lessons. In part B, kindergarten in Košice-Šaca achieved a maximal score, **there was an improvement in the inclusion of Roma culture in the classes**, but observations were discontinued based of the fact that children stopped attending school in the second semester. Positive changes occurred in Rudňany where under the influence of the project the environment and educational effects increased in quality **in all areas** (Table 1, Appendix H). **The integration of Roma culture in the educational process in other classes, not only those involved in the project are especially valuable.**

##### **IV.7.2. Primary school**

The comparison of research results shows that positive changes occurred also in classes attended by the target population of the project. In this phase of the project, we can highly value the increasing tendency of Roma and non-Roma students' interaction in Rudňany and Košice-Šaca (Table 3 and 4, Appendix H). **In comparison with the previous year interaction outside of the classroom increased and students communicated more with each other. We especially value the fact that elements of Roma culture are present in the schools as a whole, not only in classrooms with Roma students.** Interaction between these two groups was not observed in Smižany (Table 2, Appendix H) because these classes are integrated. The improvement noticed in this respect is considered to be the result of systematic work with teachers and seminars organized for them, both as part of the project.

#### **IV.8. Support programs**

Support programs are an essential component of this project – a description of results achieved is contained in the following section.

##### **IV.8.1. Tutoring and mentoring:**

Students of Grade 9 and high school students were enrolled in tutoring and mentoring programs in Smižany. The result of this program being that from the overall number of Roma students graduating from primary school, 15 was admitted to secondary school establishments (6 into high schools ending with a diploma, one into a bi-lingual high school and the rest into specialized secondary schools). In the specialized secondary school, all 17 students participating in this project progressed into the next grade.

From the overall number of students in this program in Jarovnice (42), 32 was admitted into secondary schools, 5 of which into high schools ending with a diploma.

It is positive that students are being admitted into secondary schools with a high school diploma which is a condition for developing the Roma community intelligence.

#### **IV.8.2. Secondary literacy – Teen and Technology**

109 young Roma people participated in this part of the project, which is a significant increase compared with last year. There were 45 participants in Smižany, 45 in Jarovnice, 18 in Košice-Šaca primary school all of whom attended a computer course together with other non-Roma participants.

#### **IV.8.3. Adult Literacy**

The adult literacy program continued in Jarovnice with 14 participants aged between 15 and 30 years.

#### **IV.8.4. Women's and Health Program**

The number of participants in these programs increases substantially in the 2004/05 academic year – from 91 to 192. The programs continued in all locations and must be considered very important from the perspective of improving the quality of everyday life for families.

#### **IV.8.5. Extracurricular work with students**

These activities developed well, extra-curricular club activity, meetings and seminars for volunteers continued in Košice-Šaca. Extra-curricular activities were initiated in Rudňany, where it must be highlighted that these programs are an important tool toward desegregation and involvement of parents (for example, only during the month of April 329 Roma parents and students participated in the programs). The intensive preparation of children for entering primary school continued in Jarovnice, as well as the program for home-based pre-school preparation.

#### **IV.8.6. Policy impact**

- The town mayors in locations of the project expected above all an improvement in school performance of Roma students and value this most from the project. They highlight the importance of supporting students in secondary schools in order for these to become role models for the rest of the children.
- At the same time the mayors positively value the educational approach that opened school for parents and the fact that a part of the parents started to show more interest in the children's education.
- Mayors understand that the improvement in school results and interest in further education should be supported also by the creation of employment opportunities for school graduates.
- The mayor in Rudňany specifically appreciates community activities taking place in town.
- Mayors recommend to enroll more Roma people in similar projects in order to ensure a better future. Such people would work with families on a more systematic basis, and under the influence of the project appreciate the work of Roma teacher's assistants and think of more ways to make use of the assistants' capabilities.

- Mayors highlighted the need of a better publication of project results.
- Mayors understand the need to support education of all children without any difference and feel that desegregation on the school leave is one of the requirements on Roma population's integration into society.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### V.1. Conclusions

On the basis of data analysis and lessons learned from the two-year period of the project, we came to the following conclusions related to the specific project components:

- The implementation of the project had positive influences on the observed factors in each location, despite the difficult conditions present in these locations.
- All target groups benefited from the implementation of the project.
- The project initialized changes not only in the educational process but also in the way both Roma and non-Roma communities understand each other in each location.
- The project increased parents' level of interest in the education of their children and in cooperation with school.

#### V.1.1. Pre-school education

- Quality of life of children attending kindergartens participating in the project was increased through the educational approach focused on the child and through the Step by step methodology.
- A systematic preparation of children for primary school is an important prerequisite of Roma children's integration in a regular primary school – this assumption was confirmed. The experience from Košice-Šaca during the first semester of the 2004/05 academic year shows that integration in kindergartens can be successful and beneficial if all interested parties show goodwill.
- If the situation is not conducive to canceling Roma only classes or school, it is important to strengthen intercultural education and engage children in common activities, whether in class or outside of class.
- Under the influence of the project, a practical integration of children in kindergarten everyday activities took place in Jarovnice, the cooperation and common activities of children in kindergartens in Smižany was strengthened.
- Kindergarten should be open to parents; in Rudňany the importance of activities coordinated by the kindergarten was higher for families.
- Kindergartens participating in the project made first successful steps toward involving families – mothers in particular – in the education of children. Mothers gradually took part in the activities of the kindergarten, Roma parents, according to their capabilities help with kindergarten repairs and their attitude toward kindergarten hence changes.
- Kindergarten environment reflects Roma culture, elements of which became incorporated in the content of education in kindergartens participating in the project.
- The change of educational approach by teachers, together with the change of kindergarten environments and systematic work with families led to a significant improvement in the attendance rate of children in kindergartens.

#### V.1.2. Primary and secondary school education

- Student attendance record improved in primary schools participating in the project.
- Because attendance influences school performance, the performance record improved for students in the project.

- The number of Roma students from the target group admitted into secondary schools increased, as did the number of students admitted to high school diploma awarding institutions. One student was even admitted to prestigious a bi-lingual high school.
- Participation in the project positively reflected on the class environment, where Roma culture is used in the educational process.
- We confirmed the possibility of successful integration of Roma students mastering the educational content into regular classes even throughout the academic year, which is an important step toward Roma student desegregation.
- Student mentoring has a positive influence on the improvement of school performance for students of primary and secondary schools.
- Individualized approach in education is an important means to meeting the educational needs of students:
  - There was an increase in the quality of cooperation with Roma parents (the number of contacts with teachers increased) through systematic work with families.;
  - The number of teachers using new methods and approaches in educational work leading to making students more active increased.
  - According to parent opinions, students like attending school and parents are aware of the importance of education for the future of their children.
  - Parents can feel and value the positive changes in the work of schools stemming from the schools' participation in the project.
  - The value of school in the parents' hierarchy of values for the child's future and better life increased.
  - Parents value the education of their children in school without prejudice, without underestimating the abilities of Roma children and value the increase in their children's self-confidence – all because of the changes in the process in schools initiated by the REI project.
- Support programs implemented as a part of the project confirmed the need of a all-day educational system in primary schools, highlighted the importance and need of direction, help and support for students in secondary schools in order to overcome difficulties and remain enrolled in schools until graduation.
- Literacy programs for adults and computer literacy programs are an important prerequisite for the growth of opportunities to find employment.

### **V.1.3. Vocational education**

- Practically verification model of tutoring and mentoring brought positive results in the increase of the number of students continuing with secondary school education.
- In the number of students admitted to high schools with a diploma.
- And in the improvement of school performance record for students participating in the project.

### **IV.8.6. Influence on and change of local laws**

- During the implementation of the project the work of desegregation committees improved – their work activities started with difficulties at the beginning. The result is that the number of children integrated in regular classrooms throughout the academic year is increasing. It is important to highlight, that for example in Jarovnice, a serious discussion

about desegregation in education began to take place and that representatives of all sides are aware of the need to work on this issue with both the Roma and the non-Roma communities. If Roma parents choose to enroll their child at a Roma primary school, this decision needs to be respected, but at the same time conditions must be created that favor enrollment of Roma students in non-Roma schools. Moreover, even the special school is integrated and students continuing onto secondary schools are as well (using also primary school curriculum).

- Success was achieved in involving Roma volunteers in activities; however, it is important that they continue with such involvement after the conclusion of this project.

## **V.2. Recommendations**

On the basis of the conclusions, we recommend the following for the next year of the project:

- Continue to broaden the level of cooperation with town mayors on the issue of primary school students' integration.
- Make use of all legal opportunities increasing attendance of kindergartens as well as opportunities to motivate students financially to achieve better results in school (merit scholarships in primary schools).
- **To increase the involvement of Roma teachers' assistants in the work of kindergartens and primary schools involved in the project – and in cooperation with the mayors of towns ensure that there are Roma teachers' assistants in every school.**
- Involve Roma volunteers and parent representatives in the continuation and development of work of desegregation committees.
- Cooperate with field social workers.
- Keep the trend of improving attendance record of children to kindergartens and primary school, react quickly to a child's absence, enquire into and analyze the reasons for absences.
- One of the key issues is the partnerships between school and families and there is a need to involve families in all issues of their children's education of a higher level.
- Ensure that educating children toward social equality becomes an organic part of their education.
- Pay attention to the work with parents in project schools and diminish their prejudice.
- Consider extra-curricular activities an integral part of the project, support the establishment of extra-curricular interest clubs for all children.
- Make resources available for proper monitoring of participating schools' activities.
- Reevaluate the conclusion of the project with each new participating school.
- Broaden and use all good experience that schools gained during the implementation of the project.
- Publicize the results of the projects.

## VI. EVALUATOR REFLECTIONS

In order to evaluate the results of the project, a method was developed to analyze needed data. The development of this technique is very important as parameters were set in order to evaluate results. Record sheet were also a means of directing teachers in their work. From our perspective, we believe that in case of evaluating results of similar projects in the future, it could be beneficial that:

- the author of data recording techniques is familiar with the context of the country/schools/conditions in which they will be used;
- the suggested techniques are discussed with the future researchers/users;
- a software is developed to analyze the results of the research;
- questionnaires developed are first tried on a small sample of future respondents;
- a questionnaire is enough to research the level of cooperation with families; the data tracking sheet was not too useful – especially in kindergartens where there is obviously a daily contact with parents, **because small children must be accompanied by an adult to kindergarten;**
- authors of research get feedback from its recipients throughout the duration of the project.

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