

Responsive Classroom

We want to let you know of an approach to teaching that we use in our school. It is called the *Responsive Classroom* approach. It has been used successfully by elementary teachers in schools around the country for over twenty years to create learning environments where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The *Responsive Classroom* approach was developed by classroom teachers. It emphasizes teaching children to take care of themselves, each other, and the school environment so that everyone can learn at his/her best. You will notice our class paying attention to how students treat one another throughout the day. You will also see a strong emphasis on students setting goals for their own learning and taking responsibility for reaching those goals. Your child might come home talking about “take a break”, and this is a very small part of what Responsive Classroom is.

Guiding Principles

The *Responsive Classroom* approach is based on theories of how children learn and on the experiences of classroom teachers. There are seven basic principles behind this approach:

- Learning social skills is as important as learning academic skills.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn: Process and content go hand in hand.
- Children gain knowledge most effectively through social interaction.
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
- Knowing the children we teach – individually, culturally, and developmentally- is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach and inviting their participation is essential to children’s education.
- How the adults in a school work together is as important as how skillful each individual teacher is: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

Teaching practices

The *Responsive Classroom* approach includes the following main parts. We will be using some or all of these in our classroom this year.

Morning Meeting

Children gather for fifteen to twenty minutes every day to greet each other, share news, do a group activity, and look forward to the day ahead. This daily routine builds community creates a positive climate for learning, and gives children practice in a wide range of academic and social skills.

Rules and Logical Consequences

The teacher and children together create rules for the classroom that will allow everyone to do his/her best learning. When children break the rules, there are clear and non-punitive consequences that help them learn from the mistake. The approach teaches responsibility and self-control. This is where “take a break” comes into play.

Guided Discovery

A structured way of introducing materials so that children become interested and motivated to explore different ways to use the materials.

Academic Choice

An approach to giving children some choices in their learning to help them become invested, self-motivated learners. Academic Choice can be used to teach any subject.

Classroom Organization

Arranging materials, furniture, and displays in ways that encourage learning, care, positive social interaction, and independence in children.

Working Together with Parents

Ideas for involving parents as true partners in their children's education.

You can learn more about the Responsive Classroom approach at their website at:

www.responsiveclassroom.org

We look forward to a productive and joyful year with your child!