



Dear Parents,

This year we will be using the Responsive Classroom approach to enhance our social curriculum. This 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'll notice our class paying attention to how students treat one another throughout the day. You'll also see a strong emphasis on students setting goals for their own learning and taking responsibility for reaching those goals.

Guiding Principles

The Responsive Classroom approach is based seven key principles:

- 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 at 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 components:

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.

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.

When Rules Are Not Followed In Our Classroom:

Logical consequences are a way of responding to inappropriate behavior in a natural way that allows children to learn from their mistakes. Logical consequences are respectful, relevant, and realistic. There are three kinds of logical consequences. They are:

- 1. You Break It, You Fix It-** Children are responsible for fixing the mess, material, or even the friendship they broke. In mending a relationship, children will be asked to do a "friendship fix it" in which they do something kind to make them feel like friends again, rather than simply apologizing. We will be talking more about friendship fix its in class in the months ahead.
- 2. Loss of Privilege-** When children misuse materials or work areas, I may remove the material or privilege from them until they are ready to make better choices and try again.
- 3. Take a Break-** When children are beginning to lose control, I may ask them to "take a break" and remove themselves from the group until they are able to regain their self-control and are ready to rejoin the class and participate in a more positive way. As a class, we will discuss strategies to use to regain composure when we are in need of a break.
- 4. Buddy Teacher Time-Out –** If a student "takes a break" and is still unable to regain control. I may send for my "buddy teacher" to come and escort the child to his or her classroom.

"Buddy teacher time-out can stop a negative cycle of behavior...because some children continue to be stimulated by the other students in the room when they're in time-out, even if the teacher has taught children to focus only on themselves during this time. A change of scenery can help those children settle down.... buddy teacher time-out shows them that the expectations for behavior are firm."

-Excerpts taken from *Buddy Teachers: Lending a hand to keep time-out positive and productive* by Ruth Sidney Charney and Alice Yang, Responsive Classroom Newsletter: February 2005.