

# Responsive Classroom<sup>®</sup>

*Creating Safe, Challenging, and Joyful  
Elementary Classrooms and Schools*

## **The *Responsive Classroom* approach**

is a nationally used, research- and evidence-based way of teaching that improves students' social and academic skills and raises teachers' instructional quality. Developed by classroom teachers in 1981 and continually refined to meet schools' needs, the approach consists of practical strategies for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies day in and day out. In urban, suburban, and rural settings nationwide, educators using these strategies report increased student engagement, academic gains, and fewer discipline problems.

## **Guiding Principles**

The *Responsive Classroom* approach is informed by the work of educational theorists and the experiences of exemplary classroom teachers. Seven principles guide this approach:

The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.

How children learn is as important as what they learn: Process and content go hand in hand.

The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.

To be successful academically and socially, children need a set of social skills: cooperation, assertiveness, 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 working with them as partners is essential to children's education.

How the adults at school work together is as important as individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

## **Classroom Practices**

At the heart of the *Responsive Classroom* approach are ten classroom practices:

*Morning Meeting*—gathering as a whole class each morning to greet one another, share news, and warm up for the day ahead

*Rule Creation*—helping students create classroom rules that allow all class members to meet their learning goals

*Interactive Modeling*—teaching children to notice and internalize expected behaviors through a unique modeling technique

*Positive Teacher Language*—using words and tone to promote children's active learning and self-discipline

*Logical Consequences*—responding to misbehavior in a way that respects children, guides them to recognize the effects of their actions, and helps them develop internal controls

*Guided Discovery*—introducing materials using a format that encourages creativity and responsibility

*Academic Choice*—increasing student motivation and learning by allowing students teacher-structured choices in their work

*Classroom Organization*—setting up the physical room in ways that encourage independence, cooperation, and productivity

*Working With Families*—inviting families' insights and helping them understand the school's teaching approaches

*Collaborative Problem-Solving*—using conferencing, role-playing, and other strategies to resolve problems with students

## Schoolwide Implementation

In addition to incorporating *Responsive Classroom* practices into classroom teaching, many schools extend the principles of the approach to areas outside the classroom.

They plan lunchroom and playground procedures, all-school events, and other aspects of whole-school life to ensure consistency in climate and expectations between the classroom and the larger school.

They also align school policies and procedures with *Responsive Classroom* philosophy and allocate resources to support *Responsive Classroom* implementation.

## Research on Effectiveness

Research by the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education has found that schools using *Responsive Classroom* practices see:

1. Improved teacher-student interactions
2. Higher-quality teaching
3. Improved social skills in children
4. Greater student achievement in math and reading
5. More positive feelings toward school among children and teachers

Findings are from the Social and Academic Learning Study (2001–2004) or the *Responsive Classroom* Efficacy Study (2008–2011), or both. For more information, go to [www.responsiveclassroom.org/research](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/research).

## Ways to Learn About the *Responsive Classroom* Approach

### Professional Development Services

Introductory one-day workshops for teachers and administrators

Week-long institutes offered nationwide each summer and on-site at schools

Follow-up workshops and on-site consulting services to support implementation

Resources for site-based study

National conference for administrators and teacher leaders

### Publications and Other Resources

Books, DVDs, and CDs for teachers and school leaders

Professional development kits for school-based study

Website with extensive library of free articles: [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org)

Free newsletter for elementary educators

The *Responsive*® blog, with news, ideas, and advice from and for elementary educators

## About NEFC

Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. (NEFC) is a nonprofit organization and the developer and sole source provider of the *Responsive Classroom* approach. NEFC was founded in 1981 by four public school educators who had a vision of bringing together social and academic learning throughout the school day. Today NEFC continues to refine the *Responsive Classroom* approach to meet the evolving needs of students, teachers, and schools.



NORTHEAST FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN, INC.

85 Avenue A, Suite 204, P.O. Box 718, Turners Falls, MA 01376-0718  
800-360-6332 Fax 877-206-3952 [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org)