

Dear Parents,

I'd like to share an approach to teaching that we use at Parkville called the **Responsive Classroom**. It has been used successfully by elementary teachers 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.

Guiding principles

The **Responsive Classroom**

approach is based on theories as to how children learn and the experiences of classroom teachers.

The seven basic principles behind this approach are:

- Learning social skills is as important as learning academic skills.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn.
- 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, developmentally, and their cultures - 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 the skills of each individual teacher.

Teaching practices

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

- **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 to ensure an environment that allows all members to meet their learning goals
- **Interactive Modeling** - teaching children expected behaviors through a unique modeling technique
- **Positive Teacher Language** - using words and tone in ways that promote children's learning, sense of community, and self-discipline
- **Strategies for Stopping Misbehavior** - stopping misbehavior quickly and respectfully so that positive behavior is restored
- **Guided Discovery** - introducing classroom materials using a format that encourages independence, creativity, and responsibility
- **Classroom Organization** - setting up the physical room in ways that encourage student's independence, cooperation, and productivity
- **Working with Families** – create opportunities for parents to share goals for their children and help them understand the schools' teaching approaches
- **Collaborative Problem-Solving** - using conferencing, role-playing, and other strategies to resolve problems with students

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can also learn more about the **Responsive Classroom** approach by going to the website at www.responsiveclassroom.org.

I look forward to a productive and joyful year with your children.

Sincerely,

Debbie Shalom

