



The Responsive Classroom Approach

Creating safe, joyful, and engaging classrooms and school communities.





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What Is Responsive Classroom?

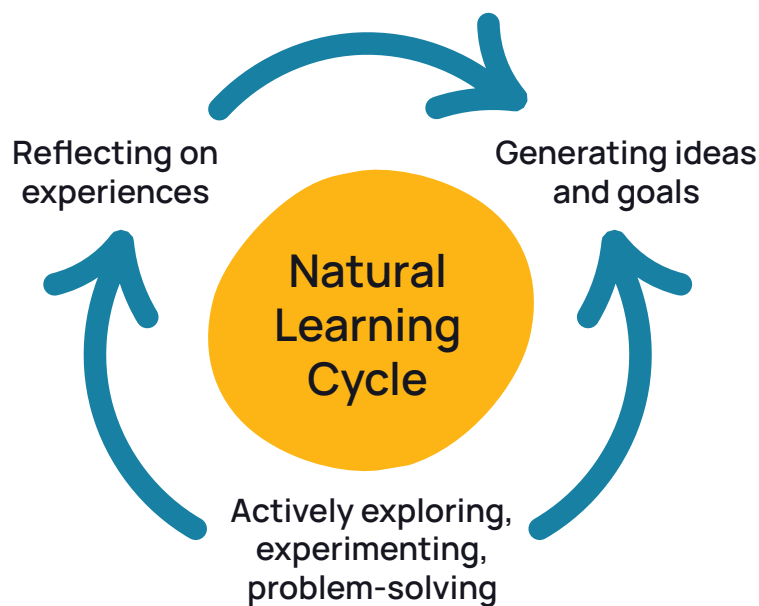
Responsive Classroom is a student-centered, social and emotional learning approach to teaching and discipline. It is comprised of a set of research- and evidence-based practices designed to create safe, joyful, and engaging classroom and school communities for both students and teachers. Schools and teachers that adopt the *Responsive Classroom* approach focus on (1) creating optimal learning conditions for students to develop the academic, social, and emotional skills needed for success in and out of school, and (2) building positive school and classroom communities where students learn, behave, hope, and set and achieve goals.





The Approach to Teaching

There can be no doubt that what teachers believe, know, and can do powerfully influences student learning. *Responsive Classroom* works because it addresses this belief-knowledge-action triad. It shifts teachers' beliefs about children and learning, equips them with new knowledge and skills, and encourages them to transform their teaching by putting their new beliefs and knowledge into action. In the *Responsive Classroom* approach, instruction is designed with an understanding of the natural learning cycle, which begins with a sense of purpose or goal for learning and leads to the deepest, most meaningful learning.



“ Classroom management is an area I struggled with in the past, and this year, it has already gone so much better. ”






- Molly, Grade 6 Teacher








The Approach to Discipline

Educators using the *Responsive Classroom* approach take a proactive and nonpunitive approach to discipline through the application of the *Responsive Classroom* discipline framework. These discipline practices emphasize building intrinsic motivation that leads to the development of self-control and self-regulation, rather than depending on external motivators such as the promise of rewards or the threat of punishment to shape behavior.

Component

-  Creating a safe and predictable learning environment
-  Preventing off-task behavior and misbehavior
-  Responding to off-task behavior and misbehavior
-  Solving chronic behavior problems
-  Managing outbursts

Goals

-  To lay the foundation for a safe and positive learning community.
-  To establish rules and hold students to those rules in a proactive, firm, fair, and consistent manner.
-  To handle off-task behavior and misbehavior respectfully, and to help the student get back on task, repair any damage caused, and develop self-discipline so as to prevent similar problems in the future.
-  To understand the student's particular behavior problem and address it with modified or individualized discipline practices that help the student develop self-regulation; to help the student learn which strategies for returning to positive behavior work for them.
-  To deescalate or interrupt behavioral or emotional outbursts, and to draw on community support to help a student regain control at the point of escalation.



Responsive Classroom

→ creates the conditions for social, emotional, and academic success by using practical strategies in the following four domains.



Positive community

A safe, predictable, joyful, and inclusive environment where all students have a sense of belonging and significance. Discipline is taught through a set of strategies aimed at proactively setting students up for success, preserving the dignity of the student and group, and helping students to develop self-discipline.

Morning Meeting and Responsive Advisory Meeting: Daily meetings that build community, honor identity, and promote belonging, significance, and fun.

Teacher language: Speaking in ways that lead each student to envision success, think deeply, set goals, and work hard to achieve them.

Positive discipline: Involving students in creating rules, proactively teaching these rules, and responding nonpunitively to restore positive behavior, preserve student dignity, and continue learning.



Effective management

A calm and orderly learning environment that promotes autonomy, responsibility, and high engagement in learning.

Routines and expectations: Managing classroom time and space in ways that allow students to focus on learning and building autonomy.

Classroom organization: Organizing the classroom space to represent and support the learners it serves.



Engaging academics

Learner-centered lessons that are participatory, appropriately challenging, fun, and relevant, and that promote curiosity, wonder, and interest.

Academic Choice: Giving students meaningful choices in their learning.

Teaching the language of learning: Intentionally teaching speaking and listening competencies necessary for college and career readiness.

Active teaching and student practice: Teaching new skills in a way that includes demonstration and guided practice.



Developmentally responsive teaching

Basing all decisions for teaching and discipline upon research and knowledge of students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Knowing all students: A collection of practices for learning about each student individually, culturally, and developmentally.

Building upon strengths: Structuring appropriately challenging lessons to connect learning to and build upon students' strengths.

Parents as partners: Strategies for involving families of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

*“ It completely changed who we were as a school.
Students and teachers knew each other and were
motivated to work things out when there was a problem . . .
And now, when I get a discipline referral, it’s an anomaly.
We’ve come a long way in just a few years. ”*

- Susan, Principal



The First Weeks of School

Educators participating in a *Responsive Classroom* four-day course will be poised to apply practices and strategies right away as they begin the school year. Here is an idea of what to expect.

Elementary: K-6

WEEK

1

Build the Foundation

Teachers will apply practices and strategies to help students:

- Make personal connections and learn each other's names
- Practice essential academic routines such as silent reading and daily routines such as transitions, lunch, and recess
- Explore academic supplies such as math manipulatives
- Set learning goals and brainstorm rules

WEEK

2

Strengthen Routines and Build Connections

Teachers will apply practices and strategies to help students:

- Continue to build connections
- Practice and polish routines from week one and learn additional key routines
- Experience more academic choices and work on multi-day assignments or projects
- Gain more confidence in speaking and listening skills, working with partners and as part of a whole group
- Work together to finalize classroom rules



WEEK
3

Developing Student Autonomy

Teachers will apply practices and strategies to help students:

- Continue to build stamina in all content areas and take steps toward greater independence
- Continue to practice routines so they become automatic
- Experience the rules coming to life and see examples of how they apply to the classroom
- Learn about logical consequences and take responsibility for mistakes as they strengthen positive behavior skills

WEEK
4-6

Building and Strengthening the Learning Community

Teachers will apply practices and strategies to help students:

- Be active members of the learning community and work together productively and respectfully
- Fully engage academically, build stamina, and work independently and collaboratively to complete more complex tasks
- Become more self-sufficient and demonstrate an understanding of the rules through work and interactions

“ *Implementing Responsive Classroom has been a transformative experience. Over three years, we witnessed a remarkable shift in our school culture. The most notable achievement was the 100% decrease in out-of-school suspensions—a testament to the effectiveness of Responsive Classroom.* ”

- Adrienne, Principal and Executive Director of Schools



Middle School: 6–8

WEEK 1

Create conditions for every student to be academically, socially, and behaviorally successful

- Foster positive teacher-student and student-student connections
- Create a classroom that is safe, predictable, and conducive to learning
- Assess students' academic skills and offer opportunities to practice
- Teach students how to set SMART goals

WEEK 2

Promote habits and behaviors that support high-quality learning

- Establish expectations for self-control
- Establish expectations for academic behaviors
- Invest students in the rules
- Teach logical consequences

WEEK 3

Provide opportunities to strengthen relationships and experience the right level of challenge

- Provide opportunities to work cooperatively, state opinions respectfully, wait their turn, practice routines, and socialize responsibly
- Use instructional practices that build academic and social-emotional skills for success
- Provide an appropriate amount of academic challenge
- Recognize and respond to chronic misbehavior and emotional outbursts

WEEK 4

Assess progress and plan ways to sustain the successes

- Assess the classroom culture
- Have students assess their progress toward their academic goals
- Establish proactive teacher-care routines



Responsive Classroom®



Learn more at:
responsiveclassroom.org

