

## ***The Responsive Classroom***<sup>®</sup>

This approach is a way of teaching that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. Developed by classroom teachers in 1982 and continually refined and expanded to meet schools' needs, the approach consists of practical strategies for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies all day, every day. Studies show that using these strategies increases student engagement and academic progress and reduces disciplinary problems.

### **Guiding Principles**

The *Responsive Classroom*<sup>®</sup> approach is guided by seven principles:

- ☑ 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, 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 working with them as partners is essential to children's education.
- ☑ How the adults at school work together is as important as their individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

## Classroom Practices

There are ten classroom practices that are the basis for the program:

### 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 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 as a tool to promote children's active learning, sense of community, and self-discipline.

### Logical Consequences

Responding to misbehavior in a way that allows children to fix and learn from their mistakes while preserving their dignity.

### Guided Discovery

Introducing classroom materials using a format that encourages independence, creativity, and responsibility.

### Academic Choice

Increasing student learning by allowing students teacher-structured choices in their work.

### Classroom Organization

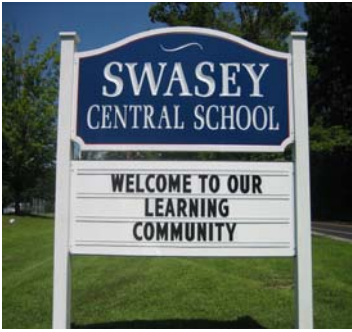
Setting up the physical room in ways that encourage students' independence, cooperation, and productivity.

### Working with Families

Creating avenues for hearing parents' 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

At Swasey, we are working hard to extend the principles of the *Responsive Classroom*<sup>®</sup> beyond the individual classrooms. We take the time to plan lunchroom and playground procedures, all-school events, and other aspects of our school life to provide consistency in the environment and expectations throughout the school and the day.

To do this we have are striving to implement the following practices:

Aligning policies and procedures with *Responsive Classroom*<sup>®</sup> philosophy

Making sure everything from the lunch routine to the discipline policy enhances the self-management skills that children are learning through the *Responsive Classroom*<sup>®</sup> approach.

Allocating resources to support *Responsive Classroom*<sup>®</sup> implementation

Using time, money, space, and personnel to support staff in learning and using this approach.

Planning all-school activities to build a sense of community

Giving all of the school's children and staff opportunities to learn about and from each other through activities such as all-school meetings, cross-age recess or lunch, and buddy classrooms.

Welcoming families and the community as partners

Involving family and community members in the children's education by maintaining two-way communication, inviting parents and others to visit and volunteer, and offering family activities.

Organizing the physical environment to set a tone of learning

Making sure, for example, that schoolwide rules are posted prominently, displays emphasize student work, and all school spaces are welcoming, clean, and orderly.

Sources: The Northeast Foundation for Children; [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org); In Our School: Building Community in Elementary Schools by Karen L. Casto and Jennifer R. Audley; Teaching Children to Care by Ruth Sidney Charney; Creating a Safe and Friendly School; and, Social and Academic Learning Study (SALS), University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 2001-2004.