Dear Parents,

I want to let you know of an approach to teaching that I use. It is called the *Responsive Classroom* approach. It has been used successfully by elementary teachers in schools 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 throughout the day. You will also see a strong emphasis on students setting goals for their learning and taking responsibility for reaching those goals.

**Guiding 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.
* 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 all of the following main parts. We will be using these in our classroom this year.

**Morning Meeting** (A letter was sent on Friday last week explaining the Morning Meeting.)

**Rules and Logical Consequences**

After we have finished with Hopes and Dreams (goals), the teacher and children create class rules that will allow everyone to do his/her best learning. Once these rules are developed, they will be sent home to you. 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. A “Deep Breath” area is also provided for minor lapses of self-control during class (e.g. calling out after a reminder has been given already). This gives children time to reflect, regain self-control, and return to the group quickly when they are ready.

**Guided Discovery**

This is a structured way of introducing materials so that children become interested and motivated to explore different ways to use the materials (e.g. colored pencils, calculators, pattern blocks, snap cubes).

**Classroom Organization**

This involves arranging materials, furniture, and displays in ways that encourage learning, positive social interaction, and independence in children.

If you have any specific questions, please feel free to email me. I look forward to a productive and joyful year with your child!

Sincerely,

Denise Russell