



# Responsive Classroom®

Creating safe, joyful, and engaging schools



2018–2019 CATALOG





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# What Is Responsive Classroom?

The *Responsive Classroom* approach to teaching is comprised of a set of well-designed practices intended to create a safe, joyful, and engaging classroom and school community. The emphasis is on helping students develop their academic, social, and emotional skills in a learning environment that is developmentally responsive to their strengths and needs.

## Our Core Belief

In order to be successful in and out of school, students need to learn a set of social and emotional competencies—cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control—and a set of academic competencies—academic mindset, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors.

## Our Guiding Principles

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

1

**Teaching social and emotional skills** is as important as teaching academic content.

2

**How** we teach is as important as **what** we teach.

3

**Great cognitive growth** occurs through **social interaction**.

4

**How we work together as adults** to create a safe, joyful, and inclusive school environment is as important as our individual contribution or competence.

5

**What we know and believe about our students**—individually, culturally, developmentally—**informs** our expectations, reactions, and attitudes about those students.

6

**Partnering with families**—knowing them and valuing their contributions—is as important as knowing the children we teach.



## FACTS AND RESEARCH

Each year we train over **30,000** educators from **50 states** and **15 countries** in the *Responsive Classroom* approach—impacting over **350,000 students**.

Use of the *Responsive Classroom* approach is associated with:

- Higher academic achievement
- Improved teacher-student interactions
- Higher-quality instruction

RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM EFFICACY STUDY  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA CURRY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

*Responsive Classroom* is an **evidence-based approach** as designated by the ESSA.

For every \$1 schools spent on *Responsive Classroom*, there was a **return of almost \$9 per student** in math and reading gains.

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AT TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT  
[WWW.RESPONSIVECLASSROOM.ORG/RESEARCH](http://WWW.RESPONSIVECLASSROOM.ORG/RESEARCH)

# Knowing Your Students

## DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

**Knowing the students** in your class happens in different ways for different teachers. A middle school teacher who sees 150 adolescents for one subject, 45 minutes a day, will likely develop different kinds of relationships with their students than a first grade teacher who has one class of 22 six- and seven-year-olds.

What is likely the same is that each teacher has a unique understanding of (and rapport with) each class—be it from year to year or block to block. The individual interests, ages, quirks, abilities, and challenges in the room help to create a whole-class personality. That personality will shift as the students who contribute to it grow and change, both individually and as a group. With just a list of birthdays and a copy of Chip Wood's *Yardsticks*:

*Child and Adolescent Development Ages 4-14*, teachers can plan for and respond to these changes.

Though every student develops at their own pace, with multiple factors affecting their internal clock, individuals in each class likely fall into a two- to three-year age range. Within this range, there are predictable stages of development, each of which has its own characteristics. For example, when children are developmentally six, they need lots of space to move around. But children who are developmentally seven often prefer working alone in a contained space.

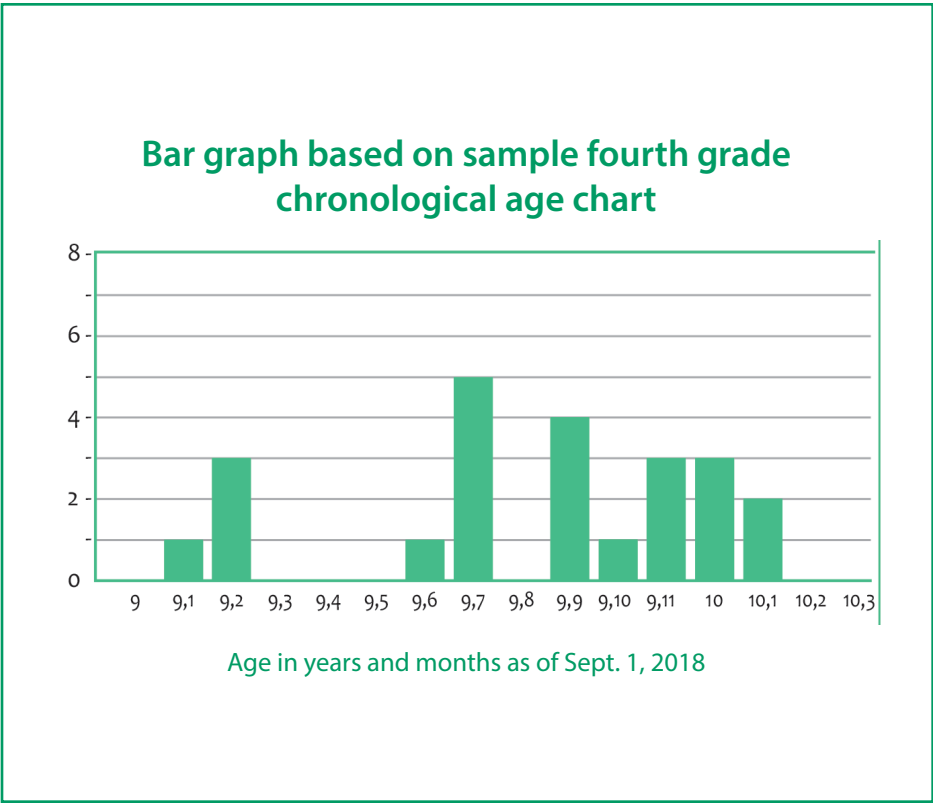
Knowing the dominant chronological age of the students in your class enables you to make savvy predictions about their



developmental needs throughout the year and plan accordingly. **The Birthday Cluster Exercise** is a quick and easy way to organize your class list chronologically, compare those ages with developmental stages, and then consider whether adjustments in your planning, approach, or even classroom space and organization could be helpful to individual students and the class as a whole.

Although chronological age does not necessarily correlate directly to developmental age, you can use students’ chronological ages to get a sense of the overall developmental abilities and behaviors you’re likely to see in a class.

A simple way to do this is to list the students in the class from youngest to oldest, using a “year, month” format to show each child’s age (for example, 9 years, 2 months). From a complete list of children’s ages you can easily see the range of chronological ages you’ll be teaching. •



# Magic Minutes

**As students arrive first thing** in the morning, I’m stationed in my customary position at the door, ready to greet each one. I offer Chase our usual gentle double fist bump and a “Good morning, Chase. It’s so great to see you. How are you this morning?” She replies, “Uh . . . I’m okay,” clearly less bubbly than usual. I make mental notes on how I’ll follow up with her and possibly make small adjustments in our day to support her. Then, Brendan bounces through the door with his cheerful “Good morning, Mr. H!” and adds, “It’s going to be an extraordinary day!” I reflect his enthusiasm with a smile, a high-five, and, “Yes, Brendan, it most certainly is!” And so it goes; student after student, some up, some down, all sharing vital information in the very first moments of our day together.

I have learned, throughout my years of using the *Responsive Classroom* approach, that building community starts the moment students enter the room. That’s why every morning I make sure to greet each student at the door. I use that greeting and the minutes before class begins to connect with students and lay the foundation for a positive teacher-student relationship. So much can be done in this short time to help students start their day in a positive way and feel like they belong to a real community.

I’ve found that my arrival routine falls naturally into two phases. In Phase 1, I greet and quickly note students’ moods; in Phase 2, I connect a little more deeply and plan small adjustments to the day’s routines, if needed.

## Phase 1: Greeting—I’m Glad to See You

Given that we all have lives outside school, it can be tough to predict what kind of mood students will arrive in. Some may have missed breakfast. Some may have been hurried or had an otherwise challenging morning.

I have found that a simple and heartfelt greeting has a positive effect if an earlier scenario has left a student feeling a bit upset or grumpy (one reason why the greeting is such an important part of *Responsive Classroom* Morning Meeting). So, when each student arrives, I welcome them to the classroom. I greet them by name; offer a high-five, hug, or fist bump; and tell them how genuinely glad I am

to see them. And I look for signs of how they’re really feeling—do they bounce in, head up and eyes bright, like Brendan? Or do they drag along, looking down or away, like Chase?

## Phase 2: Gathering a Little More Information

A lot happens during the short time my students and I are away from each other, so my morning routine doesn’t stop with welcoming them at the door and noting their moods. After greeting each of them, I informally gather a little more information.

### Learning More

As the children put away jackets and backpacks and settle into their morning routine, I make my way around the room, asking each student about their morning, their evening, or both. I offer a comment, noticing a new haircut or new sneakers while further assessing students’ moods and catching any preoccupations. Following up on Chase’s reply of “Uh...I’m okay,” for example, I give her a chance to say more if she’d like. “So you’re just okay?” I ask. “What’s up?” She then informs me that she only had an apple for breakfast because there wasn’t enough milk for cereal and they were running late. I make a quick trip to the cafeteria to nab a bagel and cream cheese. Potential crisis averted.

I find that during these arrival time check-ins, I frequently become aware of problems that could affect the children’s learning. I have heard nervous stories about mom or dad going away on a trip. On a few occasions, I have learned about the death of a family member or a pet. These are things that impact students’ daily flow or focus significantly.

The situations aren’t always that grave, of course. Some children just appreciate the chance to tell about a funny thing that happened the previous evening. Some may want to share about something special they’re looking forward to later that week. Arrival time check-ins are also a perfect time for “frequent sharers” to satisfy their need to share informally, leaving

more time during Morning Meeting for “infrequent sharers.”

### Adjusting Plans for the Day if Needed

I use the information I gain during arrival time to adjust our Morning Meeting greeting, sharing topic, or group activity, as well as plans for the rest of the day if needed. A particularly sad student, for example, may not be ready for high-risk sharing with the group. But that student may need a one-on-one conversation with me to get something off their chest. Or, they may need a “Mix-It-Up” day at lunch, where they expand their social circle by sitting next to someone new. The noticing and connecting I’ve done helps me make this determination.

## Making Space for Learning

Understanding students’ moods and their level of openness to sharing or expressing themselves requires skills that I’ll be honing throughout my teaching career.

But I’ve learned that simply caring enough to ask “How are you this morning?” in a genuine, rather than a rhetorical, way can make a huge difference. When I ask this question of students during arrival time, they know that I will be waiting for their real response—and really listening.

I’ve learned, too, how important students’ need for belonging is, and how a simple arrival time routine can help them feel that they’re important members of a community and that their teacher cares about who they are and what’s going on in their lives. Each day, our arrival time routine adds more bricks to the foundation of a strong and meaningful community. Most importantly, it clears away some of the mental “clutter” that keeps students from focusing, allowing space for true learning to happen. •

*Earl Hunter II, Grade 5, Oakwood School, Van Nuys, CA*





**“I am most excited about the peaceful, active and interactive core of *Responsive Classroom*.”**

Nicole Rice, 2nd Grade Teacher, Oshki  
Ogimaag Charter School, Grand Portage, MN

**“Simply the highest quality professional development I have ever received.”**

Kate Fierce, School Counselor, Shorecrest  
Preparatory School, St. Petersburg, FL

**“I’m constantly learning more and challenging my own practice of building community with kids, with my colleagues, and then growing—digging a little deeper into all of the *Responsive Classroom* strategies.”**

Jeanette Verdone, 3rd Grade ESL Specialist,  
Prospect Hill Academy, Somerville, MA

**“This workshop was so practical and full of developmentally appropriate strategies that I can actually use immediately!”**

Donna Keeney, 6th Grade Teacher,  
Somerset Middle School, Somerset, MA

# Professional Development

**Every Educator. Every Day.**



## Introductory One-Day Workshops



### Introduction to Responsive Classroom (K–8)

In this introduction to the *Responsive Classroom* approach, you'll learn how *Responsive Classroom* practices like teacher language, Interactive Modeling, and interactive learning structures help teachers foster positive community, integrate academics with the teaching of social and emotional skills, and create the conditions for positive student behavior.



### Strategies to Prevent Bullying (K–6)

Bullying creeps into our classrooms like a weed. Learn how to spot it, stop it, and build a classroom rooted in community. Gain a deeper understanding of how key *Responsive Classroom* strategies create an inclusive environment to prevent bullying and dive into new strategies that support students working together.



### Support Staff Working Together (K–6)\*

Students learn and grow best when the adults in their community work together to support them. In this workshop, you'll learn how to apply *Responsive Classroom* principles and practices in non-classroom environments, such as the cafeteria, after-school programs, and the bus, in order to create consistency between adult actions and student expectations throughout the day.



### Special Area Teachers (K–6)

Special area teachers face unique challenges—tasked with imparting expertise across grade levels, in small windows of time, often with an entire week between classes. You are also uniquely positioned to become experts in child development, supporting students as they grow and change year after year. Learn how core *Responsive Classroom* practices can be used to explore the opportunities and address the challenges of special area settings.

**\*Prerequisite:** Participants in *Support Staff Working Together* must work in a school where teachers have taken the *Responsive Classroom Course for Elementary Educators (RCC-E)*.

## Advanced One-Day Workshops\*



### Responding to Misbehavior (K–6)

We've all been there: power struggles, defiance, melt-downs—all those particularly thorny behaviors. Learn effective strategies for understanding, addressing, and reducing challenging behavior in the classroom; identify how teacher leadership style impacts student behavior; and consider the impact of stress on student behavior and student needs associated with stress.



### Improving Teacher and Student Language (K–8)

Words are the foundation on which teaching, learning, and relationships are built. This workshop gives you the opportunity to assess, reflect upon, and improve both teacher and student language in your classroom in order to deepen academic engagement, teach core speaking and listening skills, and create optimal conditions for learning.



### Connecting Morning Meeting to Academics (K–6)

You already use Morning Meeting to transition students into the school day and build your classroom community. Now, learn how to enhance this essential practice by examining how each of its four components can be used to teach both social skills and learning behaviors and how Morning Meeting can increase academic engagement and improve connection to and understanding of the core curriculum.



### Sustaining Responsive Classroom Momentum (K–6)

Sustaining momentum and change can be a challenge. Teachers may start out strong but lose steam during both the school day and the school year. In this workshop, deepen your understanding of *Responsive Classroom* practices—like Morning Meeting, quiet time, and closing circle—that support change throughout the day and the year and learn strategies that help both you and students stay motivated and focused during especially challenging or tricky times.

**\*Prerequisite:** Participants in Advanced Workshops must have previously completed the *Responsive Classroom Course for Elementary Educators (RCC-E)* or *Responsive Classroom Course for Middle School Educators (RCC-M)*.

Visit our website to find a location near you! Or, contact us to bring *Responsive Classroom* to your school.

800-360-6332 ext. 151  
[www.responsiveclassroom.org/on-site-services](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/on-site-services)  
[www.responsiveclassroom.org/workshops](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/workshops)



# School Packages

ALL PACKAGES INCLUDE:

## Professional Development

**Elementary and Middle School Packages:** Build understanding and get staff buy-in from the start while providing teaching staff with outstanding professional development in core *Responsive Classroom* practices.

**Advanced Package:** Learn advanced *Responsive Classroom* strategies and strengthen existing practices (Elementary Package only).

## Resources and Ongoing Support

**Kaleidoscope:** Track continuous improvement with our observation and feedback tool. See page 15 for details.

**Quick Coaching Guides:** Choose from a variety of topics to support staff and supplement their *Responsive Classroom* practice. See page 34 for details.

Start planning now  
for four consecutive  
days of professional  
development this summer!

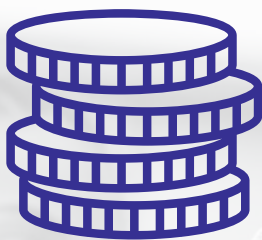
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ONGOING

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800-360-6332 ext. 151  
[www.responsiveclassroom.org/on-site-services](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/on-site-services)

# Four-Day Courses

## Responsive Classroom Course for Elementary Educators

No Prerequisite • For Grades K–6

Elementary educators know that how children learn is as important as what they learn. The same is true for adult learners. In four interactive days, you'll learn how to make your classroom more joyful and engaging through developmentally informed core *Responsive Classroom* practices including:

- Morning Meeting and closing circle
- Classroom rule creation and a proactive approach to discipline
- Effectively responding to misbehavior with logical consequences
- Energizers, Academic Choice, and interactive learning structures
- Teacher language and Interactive Modeling

## Responsive Classroom Course for Middle School Educators

No Prerequisite • For Grades 5–8

This course empowers middle school educators to create a classroom experience that's responsive to the developmental strengths and needs of every young adolescent. You'll learn key *Responsive Classroom* practices to help students develop essential academic and social skills including:

- An approach to discipline that creates a safe, positive, and inclusive community
- Teacher language to encourage student engagement, responsibility, and respectfulness
- Responsive Advisory Meetings—a core practice for middle school
- Culturally, individually, and developmentally responsive teaching
- Engaging instructional approaches like active teaching, student practice, and the language of learning

## Responsive Classroom Advanced Course for Elementary Educators

Prerequisite: Course for Elementary Educators • For Grades K–6

With these advanced *Responsive Classroom* strategies, you'll discover ways to create a classroom environment that excites students about learning, challenges them to think creatively and critically, proactively promotes positive behavior, and decreases disruptions due to misbehavior. Two main topics are addressed in this course:

### Engaging Academics: Motivate and Excite Your Students

- Design appropriately challenging, active, and interactive lessons
- Use open-ended questions to spark curiosity, understanding, and reflection
- Empower students through Guided Discovery and Academic Choice
- Promote autonomy by drawing on students' strengths and interests
- Integrate academics into your Morning Meetings
- Teach students core academic communication skills

### Effective Management: Strategies for Challenging Behaviors

- Understand why students misbehave and how to set them up for success
- Set clear limits and expectations for students
- Build empathy for students who struggle
- Teach students how to navigate tricky social interactions
- Learn how to balance logical consequences with supports from outside the classroom
- Use problem-solving conferences to address significant issues with individual students

Visit our website for dates and locations near you:

[www.responsiveclassroom.org/workshops](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/workshops)



To see something small, you use a microscope.

To see something far, you use a telescope.

To see something **differently**,  
you use **Kaleidoscope**.



**KALEIDOSCOPE**  
OBSERVATION AND FEEDBACK TOOL

Kaleidoscope empowers elementary and middle schools to see their growth in the use of *Responsive Classroom* practices reflected from multiple perspectives—academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and pedagogical—and helps them use the data they collect to create a customized plan for further growth, complete with resources to meet their goals.

Learn more at [kscope.responsiveclassroom.org](https://kscope.responsiveclassroom.org)

**Data. Resources. Solutions.**

## The Kaleidoscope Process

Kaleidoscope is a suite of observation and feedback tools designed to extend our foundational four-day courses into actionable, ongoing professional development for teacher and school improvement.

Using Kaleidoscope, a *Responsive Classroom* consultant will visit your school to observe and provide feedback on the phases of teacher growth in their use of *Responsive Classroom* practices. The consultant will also observe and provide feedback on adult and student interactions in non-classroom spaces like the cafeteria, halls, and playground.

Kaleidoscope analyzes the results of observations to create a school growth profile and provide customized resources and solutions.

The observation and feedback cycle continues throughout the school year. School leaders receive video training on how to use Kaleidoscope to observe teaching practices, interpret mid- and end-of-year growth profiles, and make data-informed decisions to support teacher growth, school improvement, and student academic, social, and emotional learning outcomes.

Kaleidoscope is now included with our whole-school packages, or it can be purchased separately.

### HOW IT WORKS:

**Step 1:** Sign up for a whole-school package or send a majority of your educators to our foundational four-day *Responsive Classroom* Course.

**Step 2:** Put the *Responsive Classroom* approach into practice in the first nine weeks of your school year.

**Step 3:** Take stock of growth areas for teachers and adults in your school through Kaleidoscope Consultant Observation and Feedback Visit (part of whole-school package or available as a stand alone service).

**Step 4:** Make targeted changes in identified growth areas using data-driven recommendations and resources based on your Kaleidoscope profile.

**Step 5:** Continue to foster growth and improvement by repeating steps 3 and 4 twice more (mid- and end-of-year) with in-house observations.

**For more information, contact our school services team:**

[schoolservices@responsiveclassroom.org](mailto:schoolservices@responsiveclassroom.org)  
800-360-6332 ext. 151





**Responsive Classroom®**

**2018 CONFERENCES • MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

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TEACHERS CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 15–16, 2019

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 17–18, 2019



# Refresh, Refocus, Recharge!

Energizers (for elementary school students) and brain breaks (for middle schoolers) give students a purposeful mental and physical break from tight schedules and rigorous academics. These fun yet focused activities make a big impact on learning in just a short amount of time, refreshing the brain and body so students feel alert and refocusing attention so they're ready for more—and more productive—learning.

## ENERGIZERS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### Interruptions

This fun energizer can serve double duty by reinforcing language arts skills.

#### Preparing Students for Success

When introducing this energizer, start with one or two parameters and gradually add more.

#### Actions

Clap when they hear a word that starts with the “s” sound (or another consonant sound you identify).  
Snap when they hear the long “e” sound (or another vowel sound).  
Sit down when they hear the end of a sentence.  
Stand up when they hear the beginning of a sentence.

#### Variation

Have students make sounds for each type of ending punctuation. For example, students could say “shoombop” for exclamation points, “hmmmm?” for question marks, and “zip” for periods.

### Pass the Mask

This quiet yet delightful activity incorporating drama and humor is best done in a circle but also works well when waiting in a line. The benefit of the circle is that everyone in the group can watch and enjoy the many varieties of masks being put on and taken off.

#### Preparing Students for Success

Brainstorm various facial expressions that might accompany an emotion. List the kinds of emotions on a chart for reference during the game.

#### Actions

The leader makes a face—for example, eyes and mouth wide open to show surprise—and then turns to the child next to him. The second child acknowledges the gesture by assuming the same expression. She then assumes a different expression and passes it to the next child in the circle, who imitates, chooses another expression to pass to the next child, and so on. Continue around the circle until everyone has had a turn to put on a mask.

#### Variation

Challenge the group to go all around the circle without repeating any masks.

#### Grades K–6

##### Skills Practiced

Focusing, self-control, phonetic auditory awareness, sentence structure

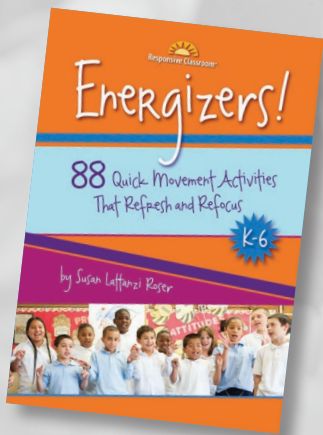
##### Materials Needed

A short passage, poem, or a paragraph or two from any book the class is reading

#### Grades K–6

##### Skills Practiced

Focusing, listening, self-control, dramatic expression, creativity



## BRAIN BREAKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Elevens

Try to total eleven in a fast-paced game of chance.

#### How to Do It

Students form circles of four or five and stand with one hand behind their backs.

Each group says in unison “One, two, three—eleven!” On “eleven,” group members “throw” one hand into the center of the circle as they flash any number of fingers—from zero (a fist) to five—to try to total eleven fingers.

If the number of fingers does not equal eleven, group members try again.

If the number of fingers equals eleven, the group does a brief, celebratory cheer (decided in advance). Then the group joins another group and continues playing with them.

If all groups merge into one (whole class) within the allotted time, form new groups and play again.

#### Tip for Success

Tell students they cannot do any verbal group strategizing or give clues as to what number they might “throw.”

#### Variation

Instead of forming new groups to play again, keep the original groups but give a new target number.

### Picture This

Envision a favorite activity to relax and create a positive mood.

#### How to Do It

Students stand by their desks and do a few simple movements, such as stretching arms overhead and “shaking out” legs, and then sit back down.

Tell students to take a deep breath and close their eyes. Then guide them through the following visualization: “Think about something you really like doing. It could be walking your dog, hanging out with a friend—anything that makes you happy . . . Imagine yourself doing this activity . . . What do you see? . . . What do you hear? . . . What do you feel? . . . Now imagine that it’s time to end the activity . . . As you wrap it up, you feel peaceful, relaxed . . .”

Give students a few moments to end their visualizations; then say “On three, open your eyes. One, two, three.”

Ask volunteers to share what they visualized, as time allows.

#### Tip for Success

If closing eyes is uncomfortable for some students, make it optional. Students may rest their heads on their desks or look at a picture instead.

#### Variation

Students envision themselves successfully meeting a challenge, such as doing well on a test, performing at a musical concert, or surpassing a personal record at an athletic event.

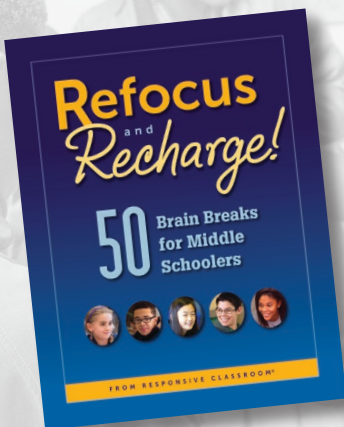
#### Grades 5–8

##### Skills Practiced

Concentration, mental math, teamwork

##### Time Frame

2–4 minutes



#### Grades 5–8

##### Skills Practiced

Concentration, creative thinking, visualization

##### Time Frame

1–2 minutes





# The Reward of Recognition

Children build on their strengths, and to do that building—to grow academically and socially—they need us to recognize and encourage their positive efforts. But what’s the best way to offer that recognition and encouragement?

**For some time, I used rewards**—tickets that I gave out when students met expectations. I’d put a ticket in the jar if the entire class walked safely and respectfully in the hallway, or when I noticed individual students working efficiently or cooperatively. Once the jar was full, the whole class earned a prize, like extra recess. But something felt wrong. Although students would often change their behavior, at least temporarily, they seemed more focused on the tickets than on learning and building a classroom community. The ticket system was working against my ultimate goal—developing intrinsically motivated students. One day, when the class was walking safely and calmly in the hall, a colleague passed by and commented how quiet

the children were. When we reached our destination, Luna asked me if I was going to put a ticket in the jar because not only were they quiet in the hallway, but another teacher had noticed. This sort of thing happened frequently, with children asking if they would receive a ticket for meeting expectations such as sharing materials, picking up trash, and completing tasks on time. Students had become more focused on receiving tickets—on being rewarded for their actions—than on understanding how and why to choose actions that would help them learn, stay safe, and respect others. They weren’t developing their motivation or their learning muscles. After a lot of reading and reflection, I put the tickets away and settled on a new

strategy for motivating students: reinforcing language. Rather than giving students tickets, I’d give them words that told them exactly what behavior was working well, and why. I might say to the whole class, “I see many people walking in line with hands by their sides and voices quiet. That helps students in the other classes keep learning.” Or to an individual student, “Taylor, you waited until Axel finished speaking. That showed him respect and let him share his whole thought so we could all learn from it.” When I taught and modeled expectations and then used words in this way, students knew I believed they wanted to and could learn. The difference in their learning—and their behavior, motivation, independence, and stamina—was amazing. Still, it



took me a while to complete the transition from rewards to words. **Moving to Words** At first, ending my reward system seemed like a daunting task, and I had many questions and concerns. Could students really be kind to each other or complete their classwork without receiving any tickets? Could I manage the classroom and nurture positive behavior without a quick, convenient system that required me to think and say very little? How could I teach efficiently while also carefully choosing words that would help students develop into strong, independent members of our learning community? But then I remembered my own learning experiences, the ones that had the

greatest impact on me. What made certain teachers of mine so powerfully motivating? One characteristic that stood out was the specific feedback they gave to let me know exactly what I was doing well. Because my teachers’ reinforcing language had helped me develop my academic skills—and become a responsible community member—I was confident that using reinforcing language with my own students would have a similar impact. And I decided that if I allowed myself to learn this language slowly and steadily, I could eventually master it. I began this learning at a *Responsive Classroom* summer workshop. We studied the characteristics of reinforcing language—clear and direct, genuine and respectful, and specific—and practiced using it.

Afterward, I read *The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language That Helps Children Learn*. I then felt much more prepared to replace my ticket system when school started that fall. **Scaffolding My Learning** Here are some of the things I did that helped me leave rewards behind in favor of reinforcing language:

- Posted this quote from *Rules in School: Teaching Discipline in the Responsive Classroom* on my computer screen: “Children, like all of us, need to feel recognized for their positive contributions and accomplishments. And they need ongoing information from the teacher about how they’re doing.”





- Created multiple cue cards on which I wrote reinforcing language sentence starters for myself (such as, “I see you followed our rule on \_\_\_\_.” and “You did \_\_\_\_.” That helps us all be better learners.”) I hung these cards so that I could see one from anywhere in the classroom.
- Practiced observing all my students carefully, looking not just for spectacular successes but also for the small yet important steps children take as they learn skills and behaviors. “Alva,” I might say to a struggling writer, “I see that you ended three of your five sentences with a period or question mark. These punctuation marks will help your audience read your story more fluently.”
- Made sure to use reinforcing language with every child. Even when a student’s behavior or work isn’t where we want it to be, we can see positive efforts and growth if we observe carefully. I checked students’ names off a list when I used reinforcing language, keeping the list private to avoid provoking competition or anxiety among students.
- Focused on giving specific information about behaviors that were helping students learn. Instead of “Good job on your math test!” I’d say, “You tried several different ways to solve that problem. That kind of persistence really helps you learn!” This helped students become more aware of what they knew, what they could do, and how they’d progressed. With those ideas and images in their minds, they could pull up their positive behaviors to repeat and build on.
- Gave myself permission to make mistakes—and I made plenty! I’d still sometimes say, “Good job!” or “That’s awesome!” When that happened, I’d follow up with specific feedback.

### Staying Flexible

Gradually, reinforcing language has become my main tool for recognizing and encouraging students’ positive behaviors. But that doesn’t mean never using rewards. Some students with an entrenched negative behavior need that extrinsic support for a short time while I help them recognize and grow their

capabilities and build their intrinsic motivation.

Before moving right to an external reward, though, I first try a tangible tracking system. A small chart taped unobtrusively on a child’s desk enables us to check off how many times she remembers to raise her hand before speaking, use kind words, or walk quietly in the hall. Having a tangible tracking system to prompt self-noticing—and to show that I am also noticing—is often enough to motivate children to engage in positive behavior.

### Fewer Misbehaviors, Less Stress, More Learning

That first year I used reinforcing language, students misbehaved less frequently, so I was less stressed and more able to interact positively with the class. And with their attention drawn to specific things they could do to meet expectations, students learned more, both academically and socially. Reinforcing language was a win-win for all of us. •

*Adapted from the article ‘Teaching Without Using Rewards’ by Tracy Mercier, Library Media Specialist, CREC International Magnet School of Global Citizenship, South Windsor, CT*

# Books & Resources

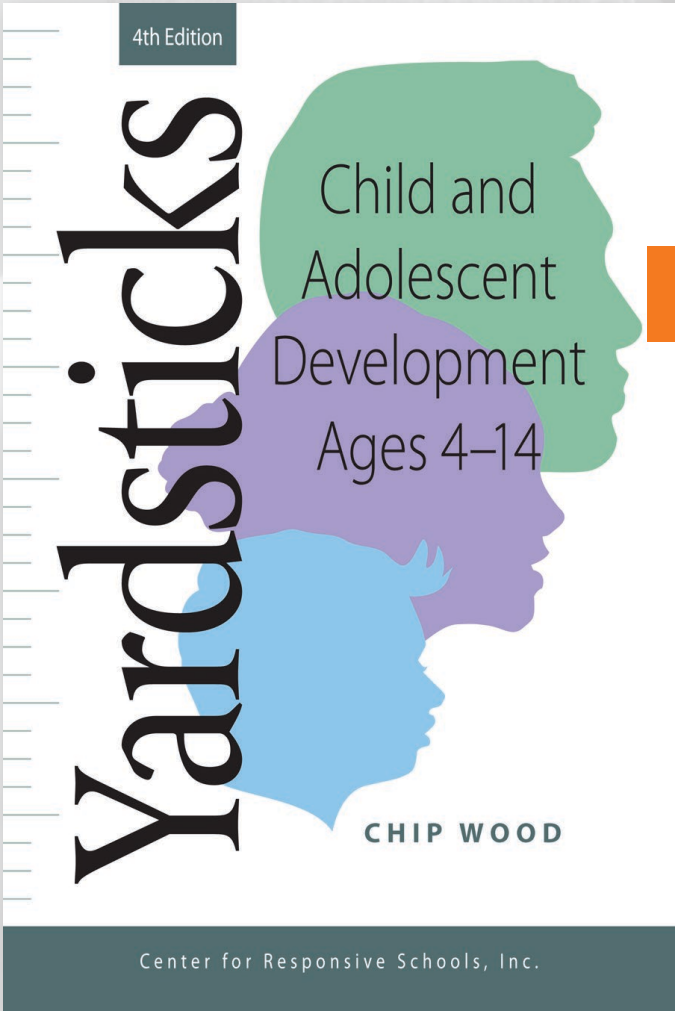
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# Featured Resources

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New Edition!

## Yardsticks: 4th Edition

BY CHIP WOOD

"In an age dominated by standardized test scores, Chip Wood's *Yardsticks* is a treasure. It describes children as living, breathing, feeling, thinking beings. Many of the anecdotes made me chuckle or smile. Informed by a deep knowledge of general developmental trends, Wood also urges teachers to take time to observe each child as an individual, and he provides helpful tips for doing so. Most of all, this book helps us appreciate children, reminding us that they are truly a joy. I find this book life-affirming. I love it."

William Crain, Professor of Psychology, The City College of New York, and author of *Theories of Development: Concept and Applications*



## Yardsticks Child and Adolescent Development Guides

FOR GRADES K-8

Share Yardsticks Guides with families at open houses, teacher conferences, and back-to-school nights and keep one on hand in the classroom for quick and easy reference. Each guide provides an overview of typical developmental characteristics across three areas: physical, social-emotional, and academic.

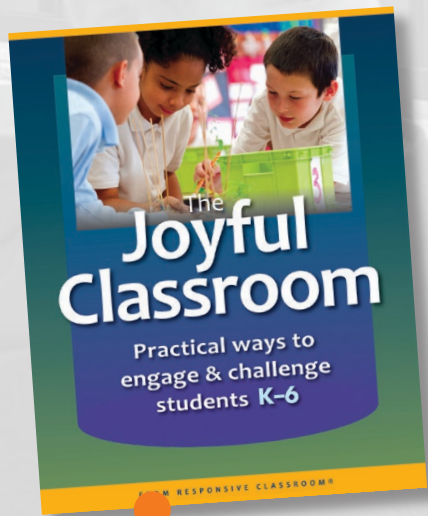
These guides:

- Span three ages at each grade level to capture the full range of developmental characteristics
- Help educators and families understand their students through a developmental lens
- Translate complex child development concepts into accessible, relatable, useable information



# Featured Books: Elementary School

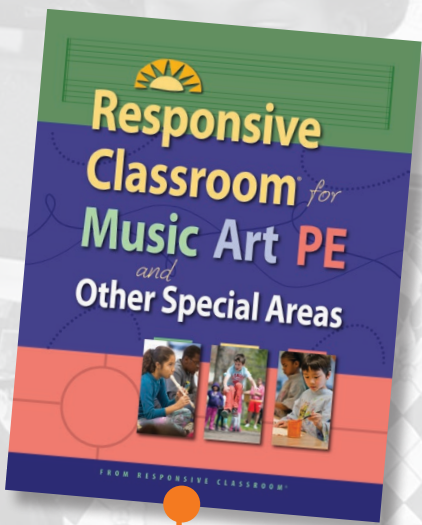
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## The Joyful Classroom

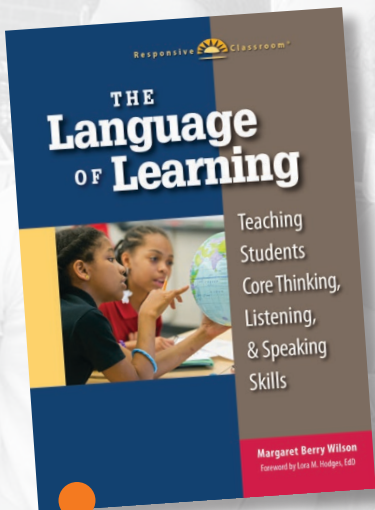
Practical Ways to Engage and Challenge Students K–6

Teachers know it instinctively, research bears it out: students learn more—and with more joy—when academics connect with their lives and interests while challenging them to stretch and grow. In this book, you'll find clear directions and practical strategies for creating active, interactive, relevant, and exciting lessons.



## Responsive Classroom for Music, Art, PE and Other Special Areas

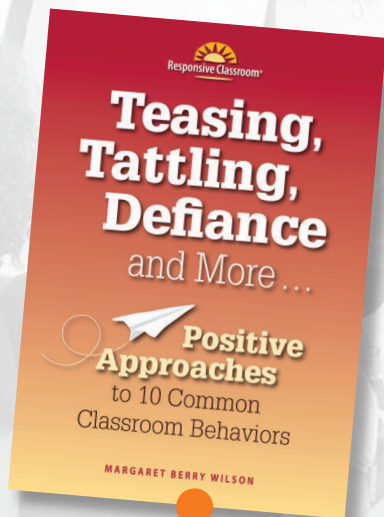
Discover how to seamlessly blend the powerful practices of *Responsive Classroom* into your daily teaching. In this easy-to-navigate book for grades K-6, you'll find practical advice, tips, charts, planners, examples, and more from experienced special area teachers who use *Responsive Classroom* practices every day.



## The Language of Learning

The essential guide for teaching core speaking and listening skills to students K–6. Teach students to consider academic concepts and communicate their ideas in a thoughtful, effective, and respectful way. *The Language of Learning* covers five core skills:

- Listening essentials and speaking essentials
- Asking and answering questions
- Crafting an argument
- The art of agreeing and disagreeing



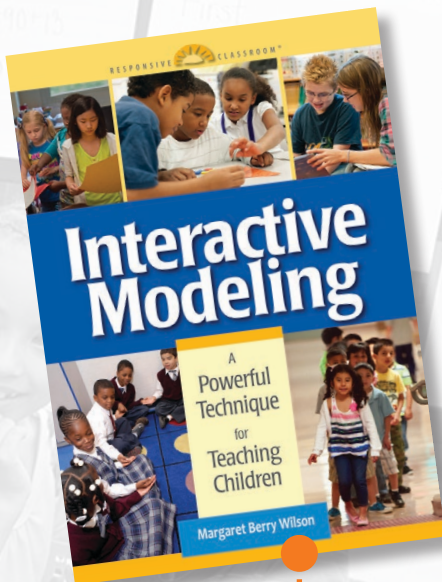
## Teasing, Tattling, Defiance and More

### Positive Approaches to 10 Common Classroom Behaviors

Improve your skills at handling common misbehaviors in ways that promote self-discipline and get students back on track for learning.

*"This book is positive, practical, and should be in the hands of every teacher. After reading it, I ordered a copy for every counselor, assistant principal, behavior coach, and resource teacher in our district!"*

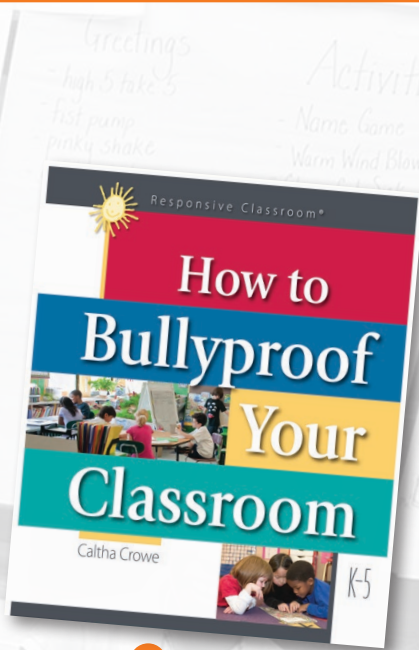
—Glenna Hess, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY



## Interactive Modeling

### A Powerful Technique for Teaching Children

Use Interactive Modeling to teach academic and social skills, procedures, transitions, use of materials—any behavior, skill, or routine that needs to be done in a specific way. Unlike conventional modeling, Interactive Modeling gives children an active role, which helps them stay engaged and better remember what they learned.



## How to Bullyproof Your Classroom

Use the practical strategies described in this book to prevent bullying and create a safe, inclusive elementary classroom where kindness and learning flourish. Veteran educator Caltha Crowe offers a proactive approach to bullying prevention that shows you how to create a positive classroom environment and how to respond to mean behavior before it escalates into bullying. Learn to:

- Recognize and stop gateway behaviors as soon as they start
- Build a caring classroom community
- Create rules with children that help prevent bullying
- Talk candidly with children about bullying
- Work with parents in your anti-bullying efforts

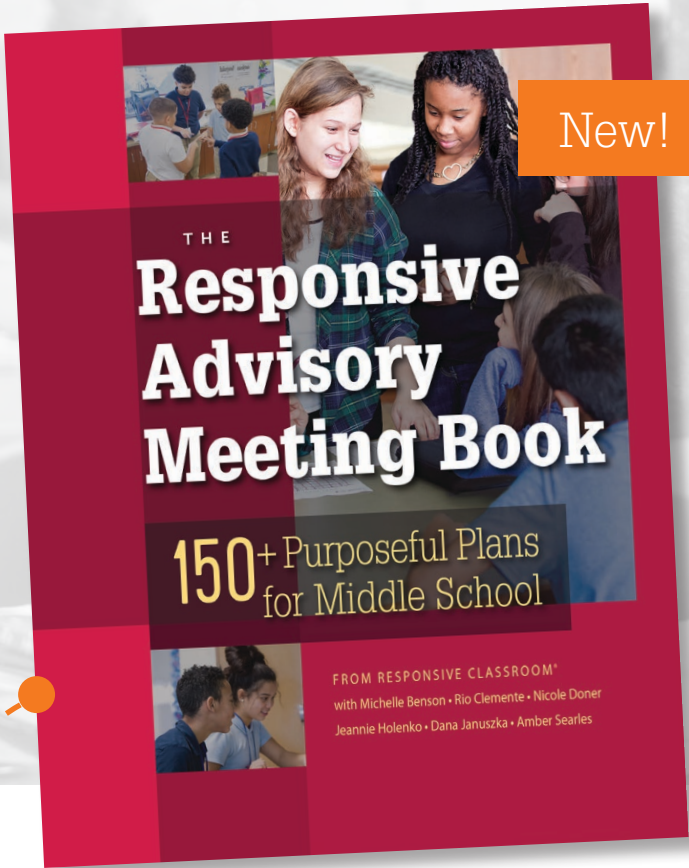
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# Featured Books: Middle School

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## The Responsive Advisory Meeting Book

150+ Purposeful Plans for Middle School

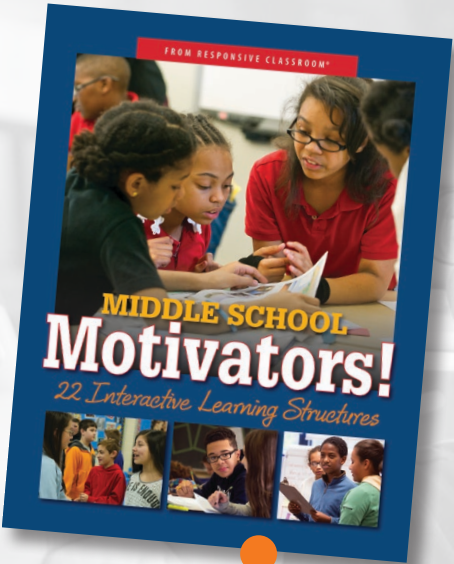
The Advisory go-to guide for busy middle school teachers!

Transform Advisory into a Responsive Advisory Meeting with over 150 structured, purpose-driven plans to build relationships, develop communication and social skills, and support and extend academics.

Developed from research with middle school students and teachers in rural, sub-urban, and urban public middle schools, each plan is designed to meet students' needs for belonging, significance, and fun while helping them build skills and explore their interests.

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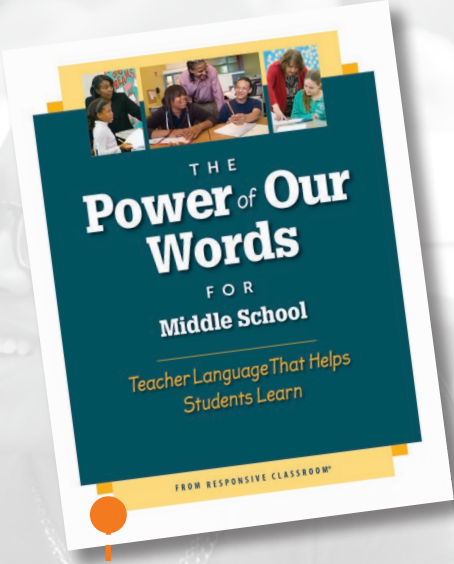


## Middle School Motivators!

22 Interactive Learning Structures

A practical tool to help busy middle school teachers engage every student!

Use this indispensable collection of interactive learning structures—including Consensus Mapping, Debate Duos, and Jigsaws—to encourage students to do their best learning together in dynamic, purposeful, respectful ways.

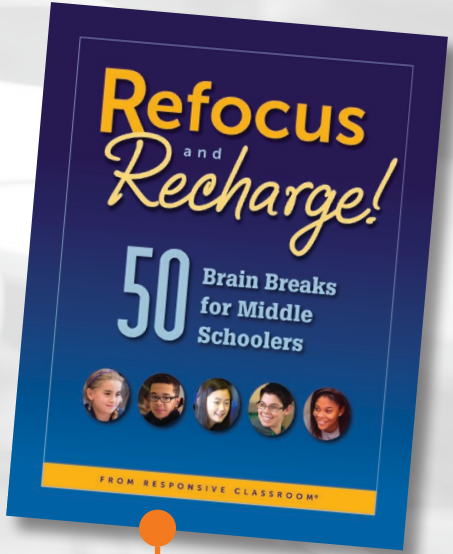


## The Power of Our Words for Middle School

Teacher Language That Helps Students Learn

Through your use of words and tone, you can more fully engage students in their learning, and support their positive development as young adults:

- **Envisioning language**—help students see themselves reaching goals and making positive contributions
- **Reinforcing language**—recognize students' efforts so they can build on their successes
- **Reminding language**—prompt students to take more responsibility for their learning
- **Redirecting language**—get students back on task quickly
- **Open-ended questions**—build critical and creative thinking skills



## Refocus and Recharge!

50 Brain Breaks for Middle Schoolers

Boost students' energy, effort, and engagement with brain breaks—quick, easy-to-learn activities that give students much-needed mental and physical breaks from rigorous learning.

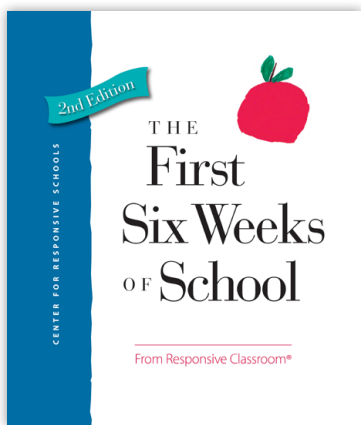
Whether you choose calming or energetic brain breaks, the results are clear: students are better able to stay on task and focus on the content you teach.

- Reenergize students so they're ready to fully engage in their next task
- Give students safe, structured ways to connect with peers and teachers
- Refocus students' attention for more productive learning



# Elementary School Essentials

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## The First Six Weeks of School

Watch children’s learning blossom all year long when you lay the groundwork with the help of this classic, comprehensive guidebook for K–6 teachers. Day by day and week by week, *The First Six Weeks of School* shows you how to set students up for a year of engaged and productive learning by:

- Using positive teacher language to establish high academic and behavioral expectations
- Getting students excited about schoolwork by offering engaging academics
- Teaching the classroom and academic routines that enable a collaborative learning community to thrive

Novice teachers will feel as if they have a personal mentor always by their side; veterans will discover new insights and ideas to make their first six weeks even more productive.

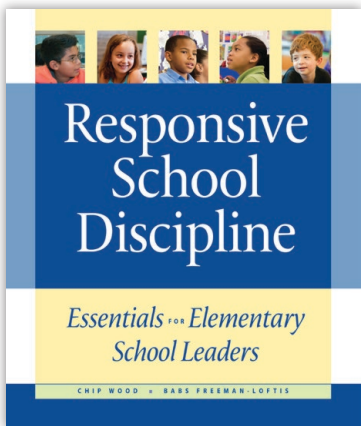


## 80 Morning Meeting Ideas for Grades K–2 & 3-6

Easy-to-do, classroom-tested ideas to help you plan joyful, purposeful Morning Meetings. Each book includes twenty friendly greetings, twenty empowering sharings, twenty engaging activities, and twenty inspiring messages.

These handy references also include:

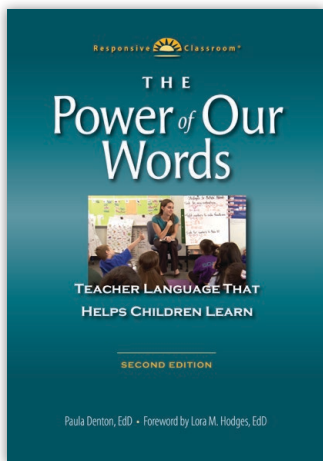
- An introduction with tips and reminders to help you plan and lead successful meetings.
- An at-a-glance chart listing content area and skills reinforced, to help you quickly find just the right idea.
- An appendix with sample combinations of ideas, reproducible Morning Meeting planning sheets, tips on teacher language, and resources for learning more about Morning Meeting.



## Responsive School Discipline

Bring positive behavior to your school through strong, consistent, and positive discipline. Experienced administrators Chip Wood and Babs Freeman-Loftis offer practical strategies for building a safe, calm, and respectful school climate—strategies based on deep respect for children and for staff. Learn how to:

- Craft school rules that children take seriously—even cherish
- Create peaceful recesses, lunchtimes, hallways, and bus rides
- Give staff techniques for teaching and reinforcing expected behavior
- Help children with especially challenging behaviors avoid discipline problems
- Give staff methods for quickly restoring positive behavior when a discipline problem comes up
- Involve parents in improving school discipline



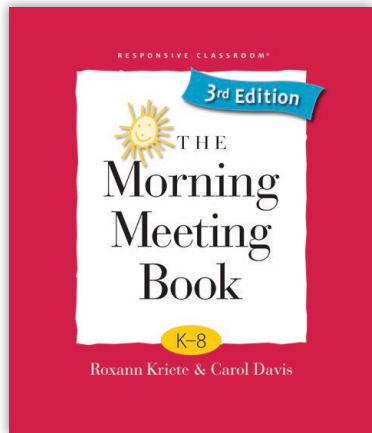
## The Power of Our Words

### Teacher Language That Helps Children Learn

What you say—and how you say it—can help students develop confidence, competence, and self-control. *The Power of Our Words* offers practical tips, real-life anecdotes, and concrete examples on how to use your words to build a positive classroom community and increase student engagement.

Topics include:

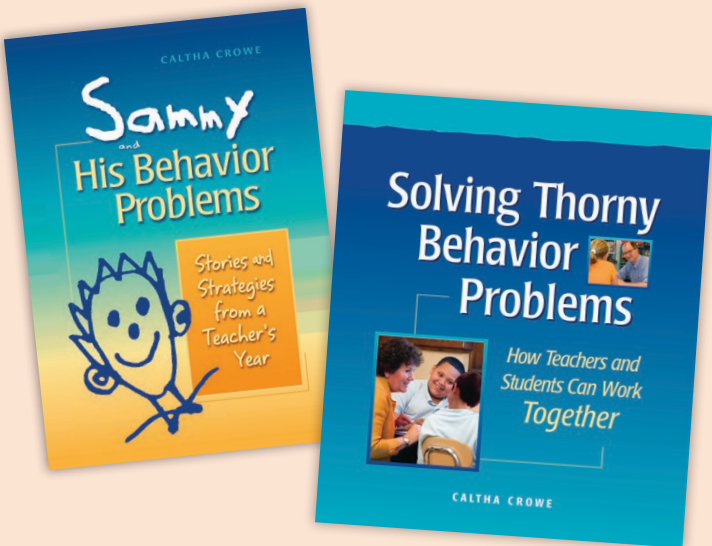
- The “Three Rs” of teacher language: reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting
- Listening and skillfully using silence
- Stretching student thinking with open-ended questions
- Using language to help students envision success



## The Morning Meeting Book

Promote a climate of trust, academic growth, and positive behavior by launching each school day with a whole class gathering. This comprehensive, user-friendly book shows you how to hold *Responsive Classroom* Morning Meetings, a powerful teaching tool used by hundreds of thousands of teachers in K–8 schools. Inside, you’ll find:

- Step-by-step, practical guidelines for planning and holding *Responsive Classroom* Morning Meetings
- 100 ideas for greetings, sharings, activities, and messages: some tried-and-true and some new
- Guidance on adapting meeting components for different ages and abilities, including upper grades and English language learners



Stories and strategies for working with children to solve problem behaviors.



# Doing science in Morning Meeting

150 Quick Activities THAT Connect to Your Curriculum

Lara Webb AND Margaret Berry Wilson

# Doing Language Arts in Morning Meeting

150 Quick Activities THAT Connect to Your Curriculum

Jodie Luongo • Joan Riordan • Kate Umstatter

# Doing math in Morning Meeting

150 Quick Activities THAT Connect to Your Curriculum

Andy Dousis AND Margaret Berry Wilson  
Introduction by Roxann Kriete

# Doing Social Studies in Morning Meeting

150 Quick Activities THAT Connect to Your Curriculum

Leah Carson • Jane Cofie

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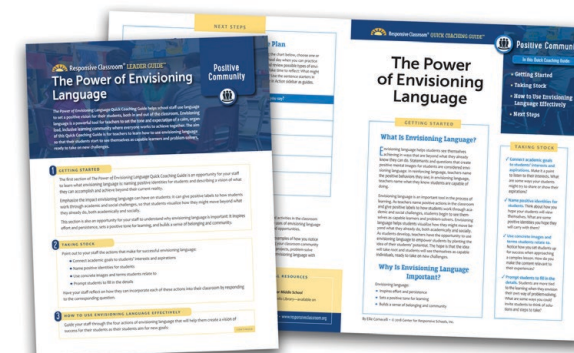
## Quick Coaching Guides™

Plant the seeds of knowledge. Watch your teaching bloom.

Embed professional development year-round for **elementary and middle school**. What are your challenges? What area are you hoping to grow? Choose a topic that empowers you!

Great for:

- Grade-level meetings
- All-school staff meetings
- Mentor-mentee meetings
- Individual self-study
- Team meetings

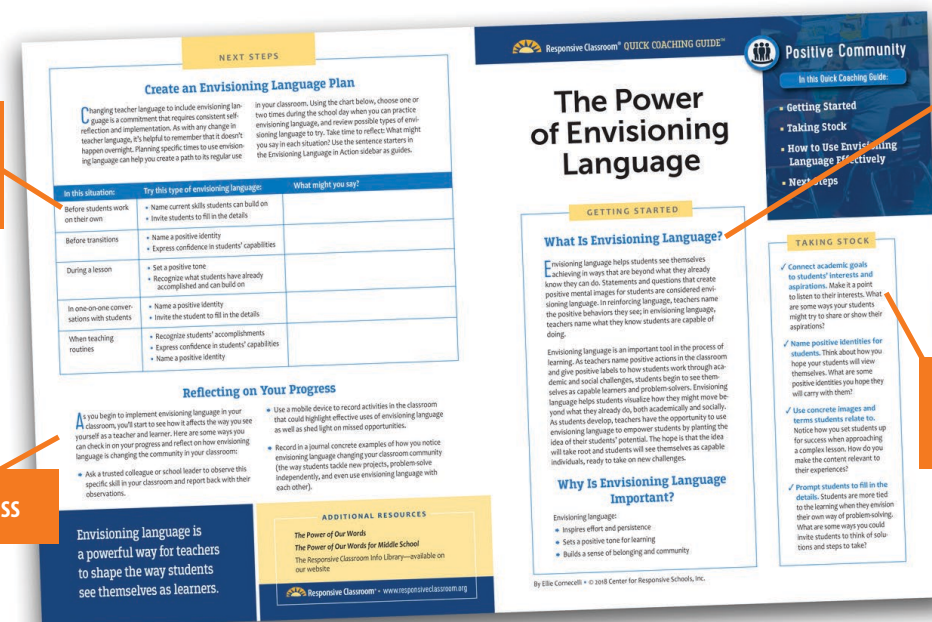


Make a plan of action for next steps

Assess progress

Content review

Take stock of where you are



## TOPICS INCLUDE:

Classroom Organization • The Power of Envisioning Language • Developing Effective Listeners • The Teacher's Role in Responsive Advisory Meeting • Replacing Direct Teaching with Active Teaching

Individual or school sets available. School sets include individual coaching guides and a leader guide.

## Set a tone for respectful and engaged learning.

Morning Meeting is a great way to transition students into the school day and build your classroom community. Our Doing Academics in Morning Meeting series will help you easily increase academic engagement and improve connection to and understanding of the core curriculum.



# Classroom Organization CHECKLIST

- ☐ Desks are arranged in clusters so three or four students can work together.
- ☐ A circle area where students can join for class discussions, mini-lessons, and activities.
- ☐ Frequently used materials are labeled, stored neatly, and accessible.
- ☐ Infrequently used materials are tucked away from view. This eliminates clutter and removes potential distractions.
- ☐ Student work is displayed, both finished and in-progress work. Show every student's work at some point, not just that of the same few "star" students. Change displays frequently to reflect new learning.
- ☐ Students know to use anchoring supports and tools. These help create routines and predictability.
- ☐ Students know where work is collected.



## What Every Teacher Needs to Know

### K-5 SERIES

**What furniture and supplies do I need? Which routines do I teach first? How do I keep lessons lively but productive?**

This award-winning series offers answers to these questions and more. Practical information about and real-life examples of the ins and outs of teaching each grade include: building community; classroom management; developmentally appropriate instruction; classroom games, special projects, and field trips; communicating with parents; and more!

Great for new teachers, teachers switching grades, substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, and veteran educators, too!

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FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

# Closing the Day With Hope

**Closing the day** is a structure that provides purposeful closure to allow students to end their day on a positive note, reflect on the day, and feel motivated about tomorrow's learning. Through meaningful questions and activities, it helps teachers motivate students for upcoming academic, social, and emotional successes and challenges. By providing a structure in which students feel safe to voice concerns and reflect on progress, closing the day builds the habit of reflection and looking to the future.

### SAMPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What is something that you can teach others?
- If you could travel to the future, what would you hope to see in yourself?
- How would you change the world if you could?
- What activities make you lose track of time?
- What is something that all people have in common?

## CLOSING THE DAY ACTIVITIES

### Group Gathering

When having students gather to discuss and share, try mixing it up with these groupings:

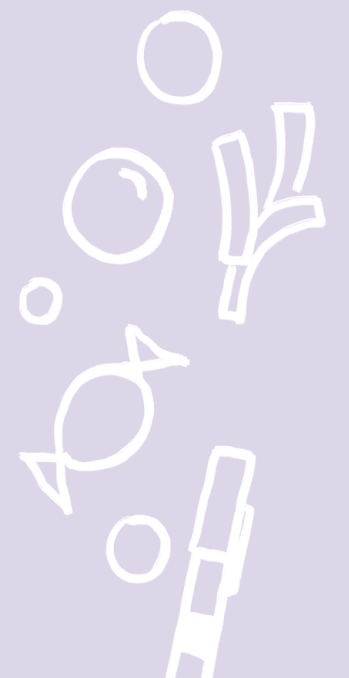
- Line up in alphabetical order by your first (or last) name.
- Gather with people who have the same shoe color as you.
- Gather with people who get to school in the same way as you (car, bus, walk).
- Line up in order of your birthdays, from January 1 through December 31.
- Line up in order of how many languages you speak.
- Gather with those who have LOTS of chores at home, those who have A FEW chores at home, and those who have NO chores at home.
- Gather with people who have the same favorite season as you.

### Inside-Outside Circles

- Name the learning goal. For example: "You're going to form an inner and an outer circle to exchange ideas about successes of the day."
- Have students count off by twos. Ones form an inner circle facing out, and twos form an outer circle facing in.
- State a question or topic for discussion: "What's your plan for conducting research about people's lives during the Great Depression?" Give time to think.
- Facing pairs take turns briefly exchanging ideas. Allow 1-2 minutes total for this back-and-forth.
- Students in the outside circle move one person to the left to form new pairs. Remind students about safe movement: "How might you stay in your personal space when moving?"
- New partners discuss the same question or topic, or a new one that you pose. Repeat as time allows. Reinforce positive behavior: "I noticed your transitions were quick and efficient. You held productive discussions with each of your partners."

### Colorful Candy

Use colorful candy, beads, paper strips, markers or anything with varying colors, and have each person take a handful. Then, tell students that they must reveal a different fact about themselves for each color. For example, for each yellow candy, they must say a hope they have for the next school day.





FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

# Closing Circles

The end of the day used to be my least favorite part of the school day. It was rushed and frantic. Now, closing circle ensures that it is calm and relaxed for everyone involved.

I love our closing circles and the closure they bring to our days together. It feels right to end the day the way we begin it, together in the meeting area, to regroup and reflect on our day before we go our separate ways.

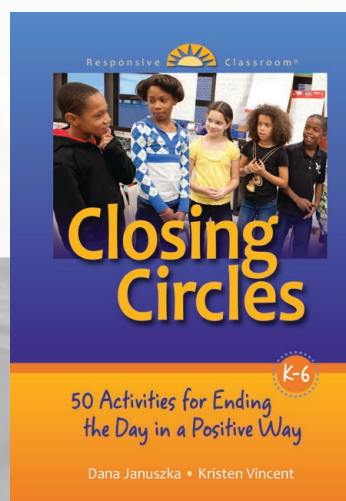
Students in my class love our closing circle, too—their packing-up routine has become quicker and more efficient in order to get to the circle on time. We chat briefly about the night's homework and then students share highlights of the day or offer shout-outs to classmates.

Shout-outs spotlight particularly kind, helpful, thoughtful, or impressive behavior. Our classroom community has become more close-knit since the beginning of the year and students now enthusiastically give shout-outs to a wide variety of their classmates, not just their usual friends.

When a student receives a shout-out, their face and body language change completely with the pride they feel. I can't think of a better way to end our days together.

Closing circle also supports our class mindfulness. This thoughtful end to our day helps our dismissal routine feel orderly and almost peaceful. We end each closing circle with a chime and silent breathing, and when the chime fades away completely, we slowly open our eyes. Students riding the bus slowly and silently stand up, calmly collect their belongings, and head out the door. The rest of the class stays quiet and calm, maintaining the peaceful energy. It feels so good to end our day this way, which is a vast improvement from the chaotic, rushed pack-ups and dismissals we had before closing circles. •

Aislinn Cohn, Grade 1, Brooklyn New School, Brooklyn, NY



## Closing Circles: 50 Activities for Ending the Day in a Positive Way

FOR GRADES K-6

Easy-to-do activities for the end of the day: songs and chants, individual reflection questions, energetic cheers, silent cheers, quick partner and group chats, team or class challenges, quiet think time, and more.

## A NOTE FROM LORA HODGES

Executive Director at Center for Responsive Schools



Many of us can sing the lyrics to “High Hopes.” The song questions the audacity of an ant who thinks he can move a rubber tree plant, even though everyone knows that he can’t.

*Just what makes that little old ant  
Think he’ll move that rubber tree plant  
Anyone knows an ant, can’t  
Move a rubber tree plant  
But he’s got high hopes  
He’s got high hopes  
He’s got high apple pie  
In the sky hopes*

Having “high hopes” matters. It matters for both educators’ and students’ well-being.

We at *Responsive Classroom* have been doing a lot of reading, thinking, and talking these days about the science of hope. Why hope? Well, consider all the aspects that are key to having our basic needs for well-being met—things such as our need for belonging, significance, purpose, autonomy, self-acceptance, personal growth, and even fun. Then, consider that research has found that hope is directly related to our ability to satisfy these basic needs. Even more exciting to us is the idea that there are concrete actions that we can take to foster hope in students and ourselves. First, we start with a research-based definition of hope as a set of two types of cognitive thinking: *agency thinking*, which is goal-directed determination, and *pathway thinking*, which is the ability to plan a way to meet the goal. As a formula it looks like this:

HOPE = AGENCY THOUGHTS X PATHWAY THOUGHTS

In the *Responsive Classroom* approach, we teach how you can foster hopes and dreams in students and help them set goals. We give educators strategies to promote agency thinking and pathway thinking by using practices such as setting expectations, which includes setting hopes and dreams, and investing students in the rules, which includes writing SMART goals. Other *Responsive Classroom* practices that nurture these two types of hope-building thinking include reminding and envisioning language and Morning and Responsive Advisory Meetings.

As an educator, you are in the business of building and giving hope every day. It is your own hope that fills you with a sense of efficacy that you can make a difference, that you can set the right goals and develop the right strategies for all your students. It is hope that empowers you to focus and build on students’ strengths rather than letting their needs stop you. It is hope that keeps you joyful and helps you find laughter in some of the most trying moments. It is hope that drives you to provide emotional support and affirmation to each other and, when your get-up-and-go has got-up-and-went, it is hope that regulates the stress and fuels your sense of accomplishment. Hope is not a small part of your work. It is the fiery voice inside you that says, “I am determined! I can do this and I have a plan to get it done!”

Sincerely,

Lora Hodges

Sources: Ryff, Carol D. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 57(6), Dec 1989, 1069-1081 Snyder, C.R. (1994) The psychology of hope: You can get there from here. New York: Simon & Schuster, High Hopes. (19569) Written by James Van Heusen and lyrics by Sammy Cahn



I am a Responsive Classroom teacher.

I believe every child can succeed in academics and behavior, and I teach in ways that help them develop cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

I am a Responsive Classroom teacher.

I believe the words I use—my teacher language—can be a valuable tool for conveying to children and parents that each child is unique, important, and able to make progress.

I am a Responsive Classroom teacher.

I use the resources, materials, and educational standards I have to work with to engage my students in real learning.

I am a Responsive Classroom teacher.

I use the power of an approach to teaching that builds positive community, results in effective management, and leads to engaging academics, so that my students can achieve their hopes and dreams.

I am a Responsive Classroom teacher.

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*Adapted from an article by Suzanne Wright, Grade 3,  
Sarasota Suncoast Academy, Bradenton, FL*



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