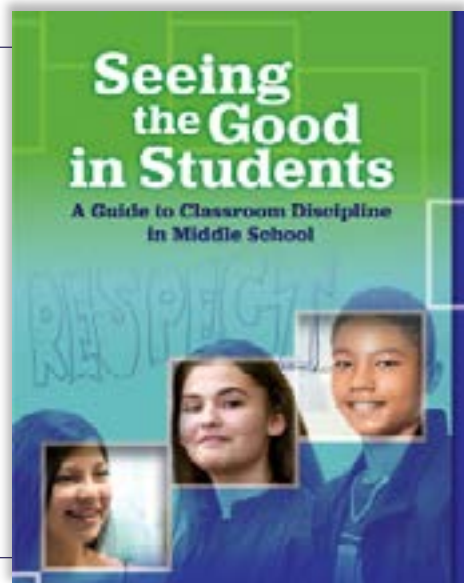**Discussion Questions for**

Seeing the Good in Students

A Guide to Classroom Discipline in Middle School

**From *Responsive Classroom* with
Rashid Abdus-Salaam, Andy Moral, and Kathleen Wylie**

Overview of the *Responsive Classroom* Approach to Discipline

Read the five goals of the *Responsive Classroom* approach to discipline listed on page 2. Which of these goals resonates most with you, and why?

As you read the teacher leadership styles described on pages 3–7, do you recognize teacher leadership styles that you experienced as a student? How might those experiences have influenced your own teacher leadership style?

Chapter 1: Building a Foundation for Learning

The physical environment in your classroom sends important messages to your students. Think about the way your classroom looks right now, including display space, furniture arrangements, classroom supplies, and decor. What is something you are particularly proud of in your classroom space? What is something you would consider changing?

The first step toward positive teacher language is developing awareness of the language you currently use. From there, you can set goals for your own growth. For example, you might want to shift a current practice or introduce a new one. What is one goal you would like to set for yourself around positive teacher language? Review the suggestions on page 27 for ways to collaborate with a colleague to improve your teacher language. What is one action step you can take in pursuit of this goal?

Choose one routine, procedure, or skill from pages 35–39 that you would like to help your

students practice. Decide whether you will use Interactive Modeling (ideal for teaching procedures that need to be done one specific way) or role-playing (ideal when there are a variety of positive ways to handle a situation) to support this practice. Then, use the downloadable Interactive Modeling Demonstration Guide or Role-Play Planning Guide to plan the steps you will take.

Chapter 2: Working With the Rules

Investing students in the rules involves connecting student goals to class rules and connecting class rules to concrete behaviors. Look closely at the steps on pages 47–54 for building student investment in the rules. How can you use this downloadable SMART goal planner to support these steps? How can setting and revisiting SMART goals help make the rules come alive for your students?

Chapter 3: Responding to Misbehavior

When responding to misbehavior, practicing empathy while still maintaining high standards is a balancing act. On page 64, the authors remind us:

> "A response that assumes a student's best intentions and that focuses on the behavior rather than the student's character communicates that this is a learning moment, that it's okay to make mistakes, and that this classroom is a safe place to learn."

How does this quote connect to the primary goals of the *Responsive Classroom* approach to discipline listed on page 2? What challenges might arise as you work toward these goals in your own classroom?

Review the chart comparing punishment and logical consequences on page 65 and the description of the three types of logical consequences on page 67. What might these logical consequences look like in your classroom? Brainstorm a list of concrete, realistic examples of possible misbehavior, related rules, and logical consequences. (You can use the downloadable Logical Consequences Scenarios as a starting point.)

Choose a question from the list on page 82 to reflect on. Does the question describe a practice you do often, sometimes, or rarely? What concrete goal can you set for yourself to become more consistent in this practice?

Chapter 4: Solving Ongoing Problem Behavior

When you observe persistent misbehavior in one or more students, gathering more information about what may be happening is a helpful step. Review the list on pages 91 and 92 for questions you can use to assess the situation. For each bulleted item in the list, consider what resources there are at your school to support these needs. Who are the specific individuals you can work with for each of the five areas of need?

Parents can be among your greatest allies. One way to support productive parent-teacher conversations is to establish a strong foundation of communication and respect before problem behavior starts. What are some structures for connecting and communicating with parents that your school has in place? What are other ways that you build positive relationships with parents?

Chapter 5: Managing the Effects of Toxic Stress

A safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment is vital for all students, and especially those experiencing the effects of toxic stress. The *Responsive Classroom* approach to supporting students experiencing toxic stress has six components (or pillars). Choose one pillar from the list on page 107 and review the suggested tips and techniques. Does your school already use any of these techniques? If so, how are they implemented? Are there any new tips or techniques that you would like to put into practice to support students?