



**Memorial-Spaulling School \* 250 Brookline Street \* Newton, MA 02459 \* 617-559-9600**  
**Tom Morris, Principal \* Andrea Youngsman, Assistant Principal \* Francie Sheehan, Executive Assistant**

September 2017

Dear Families,

We are excited to start a new school year. We want to take this opportunity to tell you more about our school's Responsive Classroom approach, a research-based approach to education that is associated with higher student achievement, greater teacher effectiveness, and improved school climate. This philosophy emphasizes explicitly teaching children to take care of themselves, each other, and the school environment so that everyone can learn at his/her best. You'll notice our students paying attention to how we treat one another throughout the day. You'll also see a strong emphasis on students setting goals for their own learning and taking responsibility for reaching those goals -- both academic and social emotional.

There are seven principles that guide this approach: The social and emotional curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum; How children learn is as important as what they learn; Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction; To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn a set of social and emotional skills that include cooperation, assertiveness, 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 is as important as knowing the children we teach; How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

Common Responsive Classroom practices you will see throughout our school, especially during our first six weeks, are:

- Rule Creation
- Interactive Modeling and Collaborative Problem Solving
- Guided Discovery
- Classroom Organization

You will see our community incorporating the following practices throughout the year:

- Morning Meeting—gathering as a whole class each morning to greet one another, share news, and warm up for the day ahead
- Positive Teacher Language—using words and tone as a tool to promote children's active learning, sense of community, growth mindset and self-discipline
- Working with Families—creating avenues for hearing parents' insights and helping them understand the school's teaching approaches

To ensure success for all students, we begin each year with a particular focus on teaching school-wide expectations for physical and emotional safety during recess and lunch. It is our hope that time spent teaching and reviewing some of our school-wide expectations will continue to promote our school as a welcoming, safe and supportive community for all students and families.

Let's stay connected about our work with Responsive Classroom. Please take some time to check out two resources for families. The first is a section on our school website, [Responsive School](#). The second is an interactive bulletin board

located to the right after entering the school's main entrance and just before the intersection of hallways. On a related note, our School Handbook can be found at its usual location on our School's website under the *Our School* tab. Please review it for important information about our school community.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact either of us at 617-559-9600. You can also learn more about the Responsive Classroom approach at [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org). We look forward to a productive and joyful year with your child!

Best,  
Tom Morris  
Andrea Youngsman