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To: School Committee  
From: Stephen McKenna and Randy Davis  
Re: Responsive Classroom  
Date: February 16, 2010

This status report provides some background on Responsive Classroom, the reasons why we chose to incorporate it into our work, impressions of the results and the next steps that are planned.

### **Program Description**

A focus on social, emotional, and academic growth is the driving force behind Responsive Classroom. Creating strong and safe school communities where student learning is maximized is a goal. Incorporating classroom and school-wide practices that intentionally support children in the development of academic and social-emotional competencies is a key to the success of this effort. The guiding principles of Responsive Classroom include recognizing that the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum, understanding how children learn, realizing that cognitive growth occurs through social interaction, providing students with clearly defined social skills expectations, knowing the children and families with whom we work, and recognizing that the way that adults work together is critical to the success students will experience.

### **Why Responsive Classroom?**

In today's society it is clear to us that for our schools to function in a manner that both engages students and encourages all students to achieve at higher levels than ever before a social competency approach aligned with academic skill development is critical. In addition, a district wide effort that includes all staff members is necessary to provide a consistent message with a common language. Responsive Classroom embodies these beliefs.

The Northeast Foundation for Children, whose mission is to create safe, challenging, and joyful elementary schools, was founded in 1981 and developed the Responsive Classroom approach. Responsive Classroom has been the focus of a number of research studies with findings of higher student test scores, better social skills, fewer problem behaviors, and more high-quality instruction. In a University of Virginia Curry School of Education, Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, study conducted between 2001-04 and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation, children showed increases in reading and math test scores, teachers felt more effective and positive about teaching, children had better social skills, teachers offered more high-quality instruction, children felt more positive about school and teachers collaborated with each other more.

## **Results we are seeing**

At this time the results we are seeing are anecdotal, but in some ways they do mirror the research findings. Teachers have expressed a generally positive feeling about the school climate recognizing a change over past years. Teaching has been observed to be more explicit and targeted to the needs identified for students. Modeling and setting clear expectations are noted by principals in formal observations and informal walk-throughs. Teachers are reporting that when a student does not follow a procedure they are reflecting more often on their own practice to identify whether they have presented, modeled and practiced that procedure adequately. We are also finding that teachers are enabled to deal with most behavior issues within the classroom community. Collaboration among teachers is becoming more meaningful and focused on student learning. Morning Meetings are taking place in classrooms and include opportunities for students to practice the skills of greeting, listening and responding, group problem solving and noticing and anticipating. The classroom culture building and the sense of community that is resulting has been a touch stone that teachers reflect back on with students when individual learning styles are a focus or when conflicts arise.

## **Teachers currently trained**

Hanscom Primary: Principal, 2 kindergarten teachers, 2 grade one teachers, 3 grade two teachers, 1 grade three teacher, 1 PE/Wellness teacher

Hanscom Middle School: 1 social worker, 3 grade four teachers, 3 grade five teachers

Lincoln School: Principal K-4, 4 kindergarten teachers, 2 grade two teachers, 1 grade three teacher, 3 grade four teachers, 1 social worker, 1 music teacher, 1 science enrichment teacher

## **Next Steps**

March 1-2 Responsive Classroom consultant, Andy Dousis, will visit Lincoln School and Hanscom Primary School for some work with previously trained staff on Morning Meeting transitioning into an academic mini-lesson, a session for instructional assistants and tutors on Responsive Classroom language, and an introductory session with parents on Morning Meeting.

July 2010 we plan to host another week long training of Responsive Classroom I for ten staff members on each campus.