

Building Community, Day by Day

On-Line Resource - The Responsive Classroom

Overview: Morning Meetings help students and teachers connect and start the day on a positive note. It's the start of the school day at Kensington Avenue School in Springfield, Mass.

In a 1st-grade special-needs inclusion class, everyone partners up and exuberantly sings: "Hello, neighbor, what do you say, it's gonna be a wonderful day."

They switch partners and continue singing until everyone in the class has been greeted.

Down the hall, a 5th-grade class has decided to greet each other in Spanish, accompanied by high-fives. Before they begin, the teacher asks, "What do we need to remember as we do this greeting?" The students respond: "We need to speak each other's names clearly." "We need to do a soft high-five instead of a slap." "We need to make eye contact." "OK!" the teacher says. "Who wants to begin?"

Welcome to Morning Meeting, a 15- to 30-minute gathering where teachers and students welcome each other, share news, have fun and prepare for the day ahead. Over time, this daily routine can help transform a group of individuals into a caring community of learners.

Morning Meeting is part of the *Responsive Classroom*® approach to teaching, which helps teachers create environments where both social and academic learning thrive. Each meeting consists of four components:

Greeting: Students greet each other by name. There are many greeting activities, including handshaking, singing, clapping and greeting in different languages.

Sharing: Students share information about important events in their lives. Listeners offer empathic comments or ask clarifying questions.

Group activity: All participate in a brief, lively activity fostering group cohesion — reciting a poem, dancing, playing a word game or singing.

News and announcements: Children read a news and announcements chart written by their teacher. The chart often includes an activity that builds classroom community and reinforces academic skills.

The routines of Morning Meeting can have a powerful impact on classroom life. The sense of community and the habits of respectful interaction inform every conversation, every academic lesson, every conflict or hard moment throughout the day.

As Kensington teacher Tina Valentine notes, the social skills children learn during Morning Meeting — caring, empathy, self-control, respectful communication — aren't just important classroom skills, they're also important life skills.

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To learn more about Morning Meeting or the Responsive Classroom® approach to teaching, visit www.responsiveclassroom.org or call (800) 360-6332.