

Chip Wood

Before *Yardsticks*, most child development books on the market were written for parents, taking an age-by-age approach. Chip Wood wanted to write a book that translated theory to practice with educators in mind.

While leading an elementary school in Gill, Massachusetts as a teaching principal, Wood prioritized community, relationships, and individual child development as part of his school's vision, but he wanted to learn more. He studied at the Gesell Institute for Human Development and was inspired to go deeper, learn more about child development, and then actively apply what he learned in the classroom.

In 1981, Wood and three colleagues co-founded Northeast Foundation for Children (now Center for Responsive Schools) and the K-8 Greenfield Center School, wherein curriculum focused on integrating social and emotional learning and academics within a framework of developmental principles and practices.

From this "laboratory," the *Responsive Classroom* approach was born and began to be shared in teacher-to-teacher workshops, first in conjunction with Gesell Institute and then by additional teacher trainers certified by NEFC "to facilitate the work we were doing in public schools with fidelity and positive results."

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not their internal being and then being asked to fit into molds [into which] they don't always fit. I see *Yardsticks* as a guide that makes the case for true differentiation, for true personalized learning."

This edition of *Yardsticks* reflects the heart of the *Responsive Classroom* approach: the belief that in order to teach children, we must know them individually, culturally, and developmentally.

"Children are growing up in more difficult circumstances than ever before, many of which are of our own making," Wood says. "Children are trained carefully to deal with their external but

From its inception, Wood says, the book was meant to inspire educators to think about student growth in new ways. *Yardsticks* asserts that growth is more complex than inches measured and marked on a doorframe. It encompasses the ways in which students learn, play, and communicate. It reflects the ways in which they see and understand themselves and others.

Many of the revisions in this edition focus on shifting attention to positive behaviors at each age. When educators and parents see kids as successful, Wood says, kids will see themselves as successful, too. "Success breeds success, failure breeds failure."

"Kids will take negative attention over no attention," he says, and so it is our responsibility to give them the positive attention they need and deserve. "The more you teach kids about gratitude, the more you teach them about their strengths, the stronger they become."

This mindset is especially helpful when educators and parents come together for a problem-solving conference. Wood suggests that educators help parents (and themselves) make a shift away from dwelling on academic challenges or misbehavior simply by asking: What delights you about your child?

Coming together in this way to create a strong adult community around each child is crucial for fostering student success socially, emotionally, and academically. "The stronger the adult community, the stronger the outcomes for kids," he says.

Building relational trust in the adult communities within schools is the focus of Wood's current work. He spends much of his professional time now as a facilitator for the Center for Courage & Renewal and working with schools as the co-creator of Leading Together, an approach focused on strengthening schools' adult communities. •

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