

Goosehill Primary School

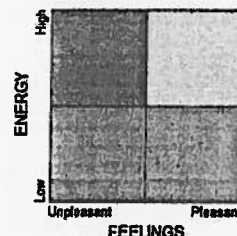
Weekly Notes-April 1, 2016



Dear Parents,

As you know, our social-emotional literacy (SEL) program is called "The Ruler Approach." RULER is an acronym for the skills we teach our students. We teach them to: Recognize, Understand, Label, Express, and Regulate their emotions using a variety of "tools," including the Mood Meter and Metamoment Strategy.

The Mood Meter is a tool we use to help children recognize the emotions they feel. You received a refrigerator magnet of the Mood Meter from the GPFA in the fall. (If you need a replacement, please let me know!) Emotions are represented as colors-red, yellow, blue, and green and are located in quadrants formed by the ranges of feelings (pleasant – unpleasant) and energy levels (high- low) we all feel at different times. Helping children identify what they are feeling in the simplest way (using colors) is the first step toward building self-awareness and the ability to regulate one's emotions.



The self-regulation strategy we teach is called "*Taking a Metamoment*." A **metamoment** is a moment in time when instead of reacting with anger or frustration, a person takes a more positive action such as counting to ten, taking a deep ("triangle") breath, thinking a positive thought, walking away from a situation, giving an "I message" and/or asking for help from an adult. We teach the children that by delaying the instinct to lash out in anger or frustration, a person can respond in a way that is helpful to everyone involved. ("make a helpful choice") A metamoment gives your brain time to think so you can "be your best self."

Giving an "I message" is an important strategy to use if a classmate "breaks" the class or school charter. The children know how to give "I messages," and the adults in our school support their efforts to use them. These messages are a form of self-advocacy and a way to use words to express feelings to avoid acting out in anger. An "I message" might sound like this: "*I feel sad when you say I can't play.*" Or "*I feel angry when you take my toy.*" Or "*I don't like it when you push me.*" The children are learning to express themselves in a positive way and also to accept an apology and a promise from a friend who might have made a "hurtful choice." Of course, the children know consequences are part of the process if someone continues making hurtful choices.

A group of parents and I recently read the book No Drama Discipline- the Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind. While one goal of the book was to share ways to "*get children to cooperate and do the right thing*," we found it very interesting to explore the second, more long-term goal: "*to teach children in ways that develop skills and the capacity to resiliently handle challenging situations, frustrations, and emotional storms that might make them lose control.*" I recommend the book to all parents. It is perfectly aligned with the goals of the RULER approach and all we do in school to support our students' social-emotional development.

The research on the topic is clear: When children learn self-regulation strategies in the primary years, they are more able to build positive relationships, manage stress, and learn at high levels in the future.

We will be reading a new book this month: How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success. Our discussion will be on Wednesday, April 20th at 10:00. We hope to have as many parents as possible read the book and participate in another terrific discussion. Please join us!

Warm regards,

Lynn Herschlein