



# Goosehill Primary School

## Weekly Notes-January 15, 2016



Dear Parents,

As you know, we are making a concerted effort to teach our students about diversity. We are noticing they are very interested in the topic. Our students are thinking and talking about the differences they observe among their peers and in the world. At our Spirit Day Assembly on Wednesday, we viewed a Sesame Street video, “*Count Me In*” and discussed accepting and respecting differences. Students from Mrs. Riggles’ class, *Kelsey, Sophia, Jasmine, Chloe, Luke, and Matthew*, performed a terrific skit they’d written in library club about diversity. We also made connections to the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As we honor his birthday on Monday, I hope your children will share with you what they have learned in school about his life and mission.

As adults, we may be tempted to model being “difference blind” and avoid talking with our children about how people are different. However, research suggests that it is important to talk directly with them about diversity. Here are some ideas, courtesy of TeachingTolerance.org:

**Acknowledge difference.** Rather than teaching children that we are all the same, acknowledge the many ways people are different, and emphasize some of the positive aspects of our differences — language diversity and various music and cooking styles, for example. Likewise, be honest about instances, historical and current, when people have been mistreated because of their differences. Encourage your child to talk about what makes him or her different, and discuss ways that may have helped or hurt. After that, finding similarities becomes even more powerful, creating a sense of common ground.

**Challenge intolerance.** If your child says or does something indicating bias or prejudice, don't meet the action with silence. Silence indicates acceptance, and a simple command — “Don't say that” — is not enough. First try to find the root of the action or comment: “What made you say that about Sam?” Then, explain why the action or comment was unacceptable.

**Emphasize the positive.** Just as you should challenge your child's actions if they indicate bias or prejudice, it's important to praise him for behavior that shows respect and empathy for others. Catch your child treating people kindly, let him or her know you noticed, and discuss why it's a desirable behavior.

**Embrace curiosity.** Be careful not to ignore or discourage your youngster's questions about differences among people, even if the questions make you uncomfortable. Not being open to such questions sends the message that difference is negative.

**Foster pride.** Talk to your child about your family heritage to encourage self-knowledge and a positive self-concept.

Connecting with our focus on diversity, our Social Emotional Feeling Word for this month is **respect**. The teachers will be reading books to the children that exemplify *respect* in a variety of contexts and engaging them in discussions about the tenets of our School Charters which say: “*We all want to feel safe, happy, and included,*” and “*We will use nice words and invite people to play.*” I know you will have important conversations with your child when you complete the Feeling Words homework this month.

Enjoy the long weekend!

Warm regards,

Lynn Herschlein

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