



Goosehill Primary School

Weekly Notes-December 2, 2016



Dear Parents,

At next Wednesday's GPFA meeting, I will be reviewing the Goosehill Report Card and discussing ways to support your child's academic growth. (Report Cards will be available on the Parent Portal next Friday afternoon.) Our school psychologist, Mrs. Schmid, will join us for the meeting, as we will continue our discussion about social-emotional learning and how we approach discipline at Goosehill Primary School. (I will also be offering one more lunch-recess volunteer training immediately after the meeting!)

One of the most important ideas I hope to share with you next week is how to help children develop the attitudes and behaviors that will help them be successful learners throughout their lives. Research has shown that the most successful students are not necessarily the ones for whom learning comes the easiest. In fact, it is more how children *view* learning and their own potential that determines their success.

Stanford University psychology professor Carol Dweck's research about children's learning has shown that it is important for teachers and parents to foster what she calls a "**growth mindset**." According to her findings, some children (and adults) have what she calls "**fixed mindsets**." People with fixed mindsets believe that they either *do* or *do not* possess certain skills or aptitudes and that no amount of effort can change that. (Think about people you know who say, "*I am terrible at math.*" or "*I can't spell.*") On the other hand, people with "growth mindsets" believe that they can learn new skills or achieve almost anything if they put their minds to it. They are not afraid to try and fail. People with a growth mindset believe that the brain is like a muscle that can grow stronger.

Dweck suggests that instead of praising a child's intelligence ("*You're so smart.*") adults should praise a child's **effort**, **process** (how a child approaches a task), and **perseverance**. For example, Dweck suggests these phrases: "*Wow, you really practiced that, and look how you've improved!*" "*You tried different strategies and you figured out how to solve the problem.*" "*You stuck to this and now you really understand it.*"

Dweck also believes it is important to teach young learners that it's okay to make mistakes---mistakes are an important part of the learning process. Many times, children assume we expect them to do things correctly all the time! Some children are afraid to take risks because they are afraid to fail. We need to let children know that mistakes are essential to learning. And more than just telling them, we have to model it. Acknowledge the mistakes you make, and help your child see that you are okay with having failed. Help your child see that the mistake has helped you learn something new---and your brain is stronger because of it!

Research shows that what parents say about schoolwork and learning can have a powerful impact on their children's mindsets. As you review your child's homework, listen to him/her read, watch him/her build a complex block structure, and especially when you review his/her report card next week, think about promoting a growth mindset. Find ways to praise how hard your child works. Marvel at how s/he tries a few ways to do something before it works. Compliment your child when s/he tries something new---even if s/he doesn't do it perfectly. Help your child take pride in effort and perseverance. Subtle changes in how and what we say to children can make a big difference.

Mrs. Schmid and I look forward to a rich discussion on Wednesday. I hope to see you there!

Warm regards,
Lynn Herschlein

