

January 1, 2019

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! I hope you enjoyed the winter break with your children. They returned to school looking a little bit taller, and full of enthusiasm!

With the start of the New Year, many of us are thinking about resolutions. I thought it would be a good time to share a couple of ideas for *small changes* that can make a *big difference* in your child's life.

Resolution #1 Read Aloud to Your Child

There are very few things parents can do that will have as dramatic an impact on their children's academic success as reading aloud to them. This is especially true when children are in the early reading stages, as the books they can read on their own are not as interesting as those a parent can read to them. Choose interesting picture books, short chapter books, and informational books about topics that interest your child. Don't forget silly poetry, jokes and riddle books--anything that makes children laugh---especially for reluctant listeners. Reading aloud to children helps them develop vocabulary and a strong knowledge base, builds language and reading comprehension skills, and fosters a positive attitude about reading that will last a lifetime---all essential to becoming a thoughtful, knowledgeable, productive student and citizen. I will be doing a workshop for parents on **Friday, January 11th** at 9:30 on how to make reading aloud most beneficial for children. I hope you will join us!

Resolution #2 Involve Your Child in Helping Around the House

Children benefit from having chores. It teaches them to be responsible, develop empathy and connectedness, (as a contributing member of the family), and gives them a sense of pride. Here is a sample list of chores that are developmentally appropriate for 4-7 year olds:

- Make own bed (simple comforter)
- Sort clothes
- Help fold towels, match socks
- Water plants
- Set and clear the table
- Unload dishwasher (with supervision)
- Help carry packages in from the car
- Pick up and put away toys
- Feed pets
- Empty indoor trash cans
- Put groceries away (reachable shelves)

To help motivate you, here is a link to an article, "Happy Children Do Chores."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/18/opinion/sunday/children-chores-parenting.html>

Resolution #3 Slow Down

Young children do not need to have scheduled activities every day. In fact, they need very few structured activities outside of school. While there are certainly activities that are enriching for children, overscheduling can have a negative effect. Namely, it reduces the amount of time children spend playing, developing social skills, and engaging in artistic creation. Unscheduled, or "downtime" has many benefits. It even gives children experience with handling feelings such as boredom and impatience, and gives them opportunities to learn how to solve their own problems. (Just be sure *down* time isn't synonymous with *screen* time!)

Read this article to learn more about the dangers of overscheduling and the power of down time for children:
<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/is-your-child-overscheduled-kids-need-down-time/>

If you really want to make a big difference in your child's life- commit to spending one-on-one time each day with him/her. Spending just 10 minutes per day of uninterrupted, one-on-one time with each of your children builds emotional connections, reduces negative behaviors, and makes children more cooperative throughout the day.

Mrs. Schmid, our school psychologist, and I will be facilitating a discussion for parents on this and other parenting topics on **Wednesday, January 30th at 10:00.**

I hope you will be able to join us at this week's GPFA meeting when our special area teachers of art, music, library/media, and physical education will be discussing their programs and goals for our students. Additionally, I hope to see you at least one of the other January workshops—on reading (Friday 1/11 at 9:30) and parenting topics (Wednesday, 1/30 at 10:00)!

Have a wonderful weekend!

Warm regards,
Lynn Herschlein