

March 29, 2019

Dear Families,

As you know, our HERO theme involves teaching our students about empathy and respect. In primary school, children start to notice when people around them look, sound, or act differently from what they have come to expect, and they are naturally curious about it. Young children are also just developing the ability to see the world from another's perspective and to understand that others have the same needs and feelings as they do.

As a school community, we are intentional about teaching children about empathy. We teach them to respect the differences they observe in others, to consider the challenges others may face, and to be sensitive and kind when encountering someone whose appearance or behavior might be "unexpected" or different. We know that the ability to empathize is a skill that can positively affect our students in many ways.

-from the book **Unselfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World:**

"The ability to empathize affects our kids' future health, wealth, authentic happiness, relationship satisfaction, and ability to bounce back from adversity. It promotes kindness, prosocial behaviors, and moral courage and it is an effective antidote to bullying, aggression, prejudice, and racism. Empathy is also a positive predictor of children's reading and math test scores and critical thinking skills, prepares kids for the global world, and gives them a job market boost."

This week our students learned a little more about differences through stories and videos about children with autism spectrum disorder. Our focus is on ways to be a friend to someone whose brain might work a little differently, or who may communicate differently, or someone whose actions may seem a little unexpected at times. Your children showed insight and kindness in all of their responses. (Some class lessons may be occurring on Monday.)

If you would like to continue the conversation with your child at home, here are links to videos and an article from Kidshealth.org (a terrific website covering a multitude of health and wellness topics for parents and children) that you may find helpful:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuV8AddbXIs>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU2MegkqIxQ>
<https://autism.sesamestreet.org/video/amazing-song/>
<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/autism.html>

Thank you for your continued support and involvement in your child's education.

Warm regards,

Lynn Herschlein