

Elementary School Counseling Newsletter

Cedar Grove Public Schools

January 2022



Throughout the month of December, students in grades k-4 focused on the **Live to Give** mindset. This mindset guided students to think about the impact they want to make and the legacy they want to leave. Students brainstormed ideas to make a difference at home, at school, and in the community as well as creative ways to spread kindness. Our third and fourth graders chose to spread kindness around the hallways by creating Positive Posters with inspirational messages. Students learned how to “receive gracefully” and how it feels to both give and receive a compliment during a friendly game of compliment tag. Our kindergarten classes did an amazing job showing kindness to one another and receiving gracefully.

Here's what's happening in January...

The **Passion First** Mindset teaches us that we are all unique expressions of human existence. It's vital to find out what our individual strengths and talents are so that we might connect them with our goals and visions for the future. In this mindset, we work with students to understand their unique gifts, their skills and strengths, and how to share them with the world to the maximum extent possible. Not only will they explore their interests, they will begin to identify their core values and what they stand for. The next step is helping them learn how to make their dreams into reality, tapping into both the courage and perseverance needed to overcome any challenges they encounter in pursuit of the lives they desire.

The 4 critical components of Passion First:

1) **Focus on Strengths** – We all have things that we do well. When we do what we're good at, we perform better and get better results, which benefits both us and those around us. It is critical to play to our strengths and spend our time doing what we're best at in order to create the most value. It is also important to know that our strengths are much more than what we do well, as they also include the situations in which we thrive and the people with whom we're at our best. Understanding all of these strengths will multiply our successes.

2) **Explore Your Interests** – We all have things we enjoy doing. When we like doing something, we do more of it, even in our free time. When we do things that energize and engage us, our focus is greater, we perform better and improve faster. Doing these things more often, with a greater degree of focus, allows us to become great at them. And when we're great at anything, the world notices, and value to others increases, and more wonderful things flow naturally into our lives.

3) **Take a Stand** – It is very important to play to our strengths and interests whenever possible. It is equally important that what we choose to do is important to us. It must matter deeply, because there will inevitably be challenges, and this will allow us to persevere. We all have to do things we aren't necessarily good at or enjoy, which is why we must understand our core values. We will always be strongest when we act from our values; this is when we wield our greatest power to overcome obstacles and challenges.

4) **Be Authentic** – Great dreams must start within. To do something extraordinary, a dream must leverage our strengths and interests, it must align with who we are (our core values), and it must matter greatly to us. When all this is in place, we perform at our best and are our most determined selves. The fulfillment of all great dreams involves a combination of performance and persistence.

Top 5 Dos and Don'ts at Home:

1) **DO** recognize your child's strengths and passions. Children (of course) like to be complimented on what they do well. Often, they concentrate on their weaknesses and miss opportunities to feel proud of their accomplishments. It is best to focus on the things they can do well. Some children are more athletically-inclined, some are detail oriented, some are great communicators, some are highly artistic. Recognizing these strengths in your child and praising them helps encourage them to continue.

2) **DO** spend time with your child discussing core values. Children need to know what they stand for and what's important to them. Some families establish family mottos dealing with respect for others and giving back to the community. For example, "Whatever you can conceive and believe, you can achieve" or "Be a victor, not a victim." Having conversations about what is important helps your child discover who they are.

3) **DON'T** berate a child for dreams or passions that you do not agree with or find interesting. Each person has his or her own set of unique characteristics and skills. It's important to recognize that there are no better or worse passions. The interests of others should not be categorized into "good" and "bad" dreams and desires. Being respectful of whatever dreams a child has is important for them to be happy and enjoy their unique gifts and talents.

4) **DON'T** discourage them with talk about how their passions won't result in any kind of financial gain. The job market shifts and changes. In fact, it has been suggested that 65% of today's students will be employed in jobs that don't even exist yet. Children should not be discouraged when it comes to their talents and interests based on current trends in the job market. Actors and actresses are often discouraged from the field, but there are endless success stories of those who were determined to follow their hearts and pursue their dreams.

5) **DO** fun things and understand that every moment is a teaching moment. Take your children on a hike, and you may learn how much they enjoy being outside. Take them to a museum, and see if they are interested in art. These are opportunities to talk about pursuing their passions and talents in various areas.

As always, should you have any questions about our lessons or your child, please feel free to reach out to us.

Meridith Denman
North End School Counselor
973-256-1454 ext. 5113
denman.meridith@cgschools.org

Kevin Skowronek
South End School Counselor
973-239-2116 ext. 4006
skowronek.kevin@cgschools.org

