

Research & Study Centre

Praising and encouraging your child.

In the Research and Study Centre we are constantly looking at how to make our teaching more effective and having a growth mindset (as researched by Carol Dweck) is something we want to foster in ourselves as teachers and in our students.

A growth mindset works on the premise that it is not how smart you are which will determine your success in school and indeed life, but rather how you approach new things – such as skills and knowledge. If you approach them with an attitude of wanting to learn, that when you make mistakes you will look at what you can learn from them, failure is not the end, but an opportunity to see where you went wrong and improve on that, this is having a growth mindset.

Part of engendering a growth mindset is using praise and words of encouragement that are specific and effective.

As parents, you have a huge influence on your child and their attitude to learning. The way you praise can really help them to recognize what they have done well and they can build on that. Doug Lemov in "Teach like a champion" calls it precise praise (Technique 44) and I think his advice is good for parents as well as teachers!

He says that praise is a very powerful tool if it is used well. He describes three rules of thumb when praising:

- Differentiate between acknowledgment and praise. Acknowledge when expectations have been met – eg: "you did the dishes after dinner John, thanks". If it is expected that John do the dishes after dinner this is all that is needed. Praise should be for what exceeds expectations: "Wow John, well done on that A – I know you worked hard on that assignment, you did drafts and I saw all the work you put into that – hard work pays off!" or "thanks for helping our neighbor with their lawn – that was kind and thoughtful – good job!" Praise what genuinely is exceptional.
- Praise loud, fix soft. Quiet reminders of what needs correcting/changing allows your child to change their behavior without it being in public. However, make good news loud! To encourage a growth mindset, praise not for being smart, but for working hard – this fosters effort and positive risk taking. Praise as specifically as you can, focusing on what you want to see more of and make it loud.
- Praise must be genuine – if you make it for what is exceptional and you make it specific then when you do give praise your son or daughter will highly value it - it will have an encouraging, positive and lasting effect on them.

I hope this has been helpful.

Don't forget if you would like your son or daughter to have an individual study skills session with us please email me and I will book them in.

Have a wonderful Easter and holiday.

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