

Partners in Learning Newsletter
Moving forward With the Passion to Succeed

Assistant Principal

Dear Parents /Carers,

BE KIND

Encouraging children to be kind has much more impact than just being helpful; research shows that kindness can have positive effects on health, self-esteem and even happiness.

Show kindness. At Melton West Primary School, all staff make sure to find plenty of opportunities for the children to see us being kind. At home, whether you are helping a neighbour, volunteering in your child's classroom or simply showing kindness to your family in your own home make sure that your children take note.

Expect and value it. Explain your beliefs and expectations to your child regarding kindness. When your child is unkind to others, you can say, "I expect that you will be kind to others. Unkind behaviours are not ok." Once you have made clear your expectations of kindness, it is important that you continue to show your child that you truly value kindness. Notice when someone else is kind and point it out, especially when your child is being kind. At MWPS we are using our positive choice program to support this and handing out silver and gold bands when we see kindness and positive choices.

Explain it. By helping your child understand the who's, what's, where's and why's of kindness, we can help prepare them to be ready to show it. Explaining who received a kindness, identifying what the act of kindness was and pointing out how that kindness had an impact all helps. When we give out a silver band, we explain exactly the behaviour that we are rewarding.

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone's shoes and understand what they are going through; it is the ability to feel what they are feeling. Why is empathy so important? With ongoing societal issues like bullying and youth mental health concerns, teaching empathy to children is more important than ever.

We have all spent our childhood listening to a parent or other adult in our life remind us to mind our manners and speak kindly. Kindness plays an important part in showing empathy. When we are kind, we are engaging in that "tuning in phase" where we can pay attention and try to understand someone else's experience or emotions. When we notice and understand, we are compelled to act, and that act often takes the form of kindness.

Raising kind, empathetic kids begins with surrounding them with an environment of love and warmth. It is not a place where everyone is always perfect, but it is a place that when people make mistakes, they acknowledge them, take responsibility for them and do what it takes to make things right.

Jennifer O'Connor
Assistant Principal P-2 Learning Community



Getting it right in English!

Fun family literacy projects

With the winter holiday period fast approaching, there will be lots of opportunity to spend time together as a family. On those cold, wet, winter days, why not continue to build students literacy skills by engaging in some fun literacy activities together. Some activities are suggested below that can involve the whole family in practising reading, writing and speaking & listening skills.

Below are some ideas for some literacy oriented family projects:

- ♦ Email friends or family members
- ♦ Use social networking sites to communicate with family and friends
- ♦ Read a book series together
- ♦ Read the instructions for a new item together to find out how it works
- ♦ Record family events or travel experiences in a journal or on an online blog
- ♦ Write plays and perform them for family and friends
- ♦ Create hand puppets or finger puppets out of paper and icy pole sticks and put on short performances
- ♦ Read, select and collect news articles and create an album about, for example, a sporting team, pet type, or leisure activity
- ♦ Solve crosswords, word puzzles, brain teasers, play word games and quizzes together
- ♦ Browse libraries and book shops together
- ♦ Make a movie together using a video camera or iPad
- ♦ Follow a map or brochure on an outing, including reading public transport timetables and information signs at public sights
- ♦ Read a recipe together and have a family member record as a cooking show
- ♦ Create a board game, including cards and rules, that can be played together as a family
- ♦ Follow instructions on a website to create some fun paper and craft art projects
- ♦ Create picture books of funny family memories that can be read over and over



Ideas taken from '201 Literacy and maths tips to help your child', Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Sarah Marshall- Leading Teacher Literacy

Maths at our house: going places

It is easy to turn “going somewhere” into a maths experience by being on the lookout for numbers, shapes and patterns.

These types of activities help to raise the awareness of mathematics in the environment and encourage your children to notice and figure out things. It can be practice of things they know or a challenge. A notebook in the car or in your bag can be a place where you ask them to write things down you notice as you are “going places.”

- Driving in the car
- Bus or train trips
- Walking to school or the shops
- **Number:** Find a number and use it as a “Launchpad” for counting backwards or forwards or in jumps of two or ten.



- **Patterns:** One day walk on the even number side of the street and the next on the odd number side. Notice which numbers are on the two sides.
- **Time:** Count the seconds while waiting for the light to change, notice anywhere there is a clock along the way.
- **Money:** Notice all the signs that have dollars on them: for example, petrol stations, supermarkets, and car yards.
- **Shapes:** Choose a shape and find objects in that shape along the way. You can choose two dimensional-shapes (circles, squares, rectangles, triangles etc) or three-dimensional objects (boxes, balls, cones, pyramids).



- **Statistics:** Choose one colour of car to count on the way. On the way home or the next time choose a different one. Keep going for several trips. What colour seems to be the most common? The least common?



insights

Developing your child's emotional intelligence

by Michael Grose



Everything old is new again.

Over 2,000 years ago Socrates reminded his Greek compatriots, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” Socrates was talking about the development of what we now call emotional intelligence.

Current day muse Dr. Marc Brackett director of the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence is more expansive. He says, “Emotions matter as they drive learning, decision-making, creativity, relationships, and health.”

Emotions are messy. They can be loud. They can be hidden. They so often interrupt our well-organised schedules. “What do you mean you’re sad? We’re off to watch a movie. It’s a happy time!” Emotions are hard to control and difficult to see. Like slippery eels swimming in a dam, you know that they are down there somewhere but it’s hard to figure just what they are doing.

So where do we start exploring the alien landscape, the new frontier of parenting? Here are five ideas to help you explore the alien landscape of kids’ emotions, the new frontier of parenting:

1. View emotions through the pleasantness lens.

We often place value judgements on emotions by saying some emotions are good or positive (happy, motivated, energised) while some are bad or negative (sad, worried, sullen). Avoid passing judgement in such ways. Recognise that emotions are pleasant or unpleasant and that all emotions are acceptable, whereas some behaviours (such as hurting someone when you are angry) are unacceptable.

2. Set your antennae to pick up emotion.

Ever have a child come home from school and misbehave in a way that is out of character? If so, did you focus on the behaviour or did you try to detect the emotion behind the behaviour? The default mechanism for many adults is to respond to children’s behaviour rather than stand back and take notice of what may be going on beneath the surface. We respond to aggressive behaviour and sometimes fail to notice the anger seething below. Stop automatically reacting to behaviour and start noticing the emotion that may be driving the behaviour. You still need to manage poor behaviour but responding in this way may give you a valuable insight into your child’s inner world.

3. Validate kids’ emotions.

Children and teenagers who are upset or experience extreme emotions require to understanding and validation.

parenting*ideas

You don't necessarily have to necessarily fix the situation, but it is important that your child knows that understand he is upset. Convey your empathy with statements such as, "Ahh, I see your upset that your brother ." ; " Yes, it's understandable to be annoyed " ; and "I can see that you are angry about this ."

4. Help your kids recognise, then regulate emotions.

Kids, like adults, need to recognise their feelings before they can regulate their emotional state. Emotional recognition is a complex process that takes practice. Learning to recognise your feelings is a continuous process that's best started when young, before the ups and downs of adolescence becomes a reality. Cue kids to their emotions by reflecting back to them how they maybe feeling rather than shutting them down or ignoring them. E.g."It seems that pretty angry right now. Could I be right?"



5. Build your child's vocabulary of feeling words.

Emotionally smart kids generally have a wide vocabulary, which means they are better placed to shift their moods when required. Reflect back as accurately as possible how your child or young person may be feeling. The differences between emotions such as anxious, tense, nervous, worried and overwrought maybe small but they are important in terms of giving kids some wiggle room to shift their feelings.

Emotional intelligence is best learned when it becomes part of your family's culture, or way of doing things. Impacting on family culture is the best way of creating inter-generational change. You'll know you've had generational impact when your children as adults identify you as the person who trained them in the skills of emotional intelligence. How cool would that be!



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's the author of 10 books for parents including Thriving! and the best-selling Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It, and his latest release Spoonfed Generation: How to raise independent children.