



Sparwood Secondary School

Newsletter

www.sd5.bc.ca/school/sss

OCTOBER 2022



A Message from the Principal

We are through the start to the 2022/23 School year, and it is time to think about the process of schooling. Process by definition is “a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end”. The actions or steps are learning, from grade 7 to 12 students need to take intentional steps forward in learning. Mistakes are okay, they are all part of the process, however learning must be the focus. The end is a young adult ready for the 21st century. For an undertaking as large as this it is important that parents and school, work together. There is nothing more that I could say than what was said in this article from The New York Times, so I thought I would share the article in its entirety.

How to Help Your Child Succeed at School, By Jessica Lahey

In the high-pressure, high-stakes game of school, it can be difficult to know which parenting strategies really promote learning. A successful experience in school is not only about report cards. Ideally, your child will learn how to learn, retain information, think independently, ask questions, and develop an increasing sense of competence. Here are some guidelines for making sure you start on the right foot and keep enthusiasm and momentum high throughout the school year.

Key Values

There is so much to think about each school year, but above all else, these simple rules can help keep you focused on what’s most important for school success.

Do

- Focus on the process, not the product.
- Encourage kids to self-advocate.
- Keep a long-term perspective.
- Maintain a healthy sleep schedule.
- Love the child you have, not the child you wish you had.

Don’t

- Overschedule.
- Worship grades.
- Encourage helplessness.
- Compare kids to one another.
- Love kids based on their performance.

Value the Process Over the Product

Very young children are naturally driven to learn and explore. They are at the very beginning of their lifelong quest to understand and gain mastery of the world around them. As they reach out, fall and get back up again, they gain a heightened sense of mastery, competence and self-efficacy. Somewhere around kindergarten, however, parents and teachers begin to undermine this process by devaluing the process of learning and replacing it with a mad dash for the end products. Suddenly, the intrinsic motivators of natural curiosity, competence and self-efficacy are less valuable than extrinsic motivators such as stickers, points and grades. Unfortunately, extrinsic motivators undermine kids’ desire to learn over the long term. Want your kid to lose interest in school? Pay them for their A’s and worship at the altar of grades. If you’d instead like your kids to remain curious and hungry for mastery, here are some tips for re-orienting kids’ priorities.

- **Keep report cards off social media and the refrigerator.** We can tell our kids that we value learning all we want, but when we gush over grades and stick them to the refrigerator, we show them that what we value most are the grades. Of course, grades are what most parents are stuck with, even if they are flawed and incomplete

indicator of learning as well as what's known as an "extrinsic motivator," which has been shown to reduce motivation over the long term, undermine creativity, and encourage cheating. Some schools have moved away from letter-based grades and are using reports focused on mastery- or standards-based evaluations, which can help parents and kids focus on what's being learned rather a grade. No matter what kind of report your child gets, humble bragging about it on social media only feeds parental competition, raises the pressure for kids and teaches them that your love and approval is contingent on the content of their report card.

· **Focus on the process they used to get that grade.**

When we invest less energy and emotion in the number or letter at the top of the page, we can begin to ask our children questions such as, What did you do to get this grade? Which study techniques worked for you and which ones did not? What are you going to do differently next time?

· **Look forward, not back.** The best question parents can ask when faced with a grade, whether high or low, is: How are you going to use this experience to be better next time? This technique works particularly well for anxious and overly perfectionist kids, because they can get stuck in a negative feedback loop, obsessing wholly on the numbers and grades. Helping them shift their focus back to the process can alleviate that anxiety, particularly when we help them prioritize the aspects of learning they can control.

Model: Talk about your own failures and successes with your kids, showing them that you, too, are invested in the process of learning. If you berate yourself over failures, so will they. If, however, they see you being brave and learning from your mistakes so you can be better next time, so will they.

Value Goals Over Grades

One easy way to invest in process is to set goals, both individually and as a family. Try to do this at the beginning of a new school year, the first of the month, or the beginning of a new season. Keep the discussion light and low-pressure. This process isn't about getting better grades, it's about supporting learning as a family.

Everyone (yes, that means parents, too) sets three short-term, achievable goals oriented around tasks and improvements under your control. For example, "I'm going to get all A's this semester" is too broad and too difficult to control. Instead, try "I'm going to ask for help in math more often," "I will plan one extra help session a week," or "I will practice my multiplication three extra times this month."

One of those three goals should be a challenge. We can't hope to convince our children to be emotionally and intellectually brave unless they see us do the same, so set some goals that get you out of your comfort zone. Take guitar or dance or Spanish lessons, try an activity you have never tried before, or pick up a new hobby. This is, after all, how we expand our cognitive potential and make new connections in our brains that can help us become stronger, smarter, and more efficient learners.

A few years ago, one of my sons' goals was to make a few new friends, a goal that was both challenging and important to him.

Before you set new goals, take the time to assess how everyone did on past goals. Review these goals once a month or once a semester. If you fail to achieve your goals talk about why, and what you plan to do differently next time. If you succeed, celebrate that achievement!

Model: Watching a parent set a scary, ambitious goal and talk about the process of achieving it is the most direct way to teach children that learning and striving to be better are human goals, not just school goals.

Maintain a Long-Term Perspective

Education and parenting are both long-haul endeavors, and improvements don't happen daily.

· **Don't live in the daily emergency of this homework or this test.** Instead, think about where you'd like your child to be in a year or five years in terms of competence and growth. Which is more important to you, that you deliver your child's forgotten math homework today or that she develops a strategy for not forgetting her math homework tomorrow?

Model: When things go wrong in your own life, talk about them. Keep your focus on doing better next time and your long-term perspective. For example, if you mess up at work, frame your discussion around improvement and long-term progress: “Well, this work project did not work out the way I wanted, but I still love what I do and want to be doing something related in five years. Here’s how I plan to learn from this so I can get there.”

Help Them Find Balance

Kids are overscheduled, families are in a constant rush, but a few, strategic pauses in your family’s day can make a huge difference.

Help Kids Create Effective Good Routines Present mornings, chores, and homework time to kids as a problem to be solved together. In a quiet, calm moment, say, “You know, mornings are really hectic around here and it’s hard for everyone to remember to get out the door with everything they need. How do you think we can make mornings easier and happier?”

Kids are more likely to stick with a plan they created themselves. Buy-in happens most often when kids have a hand in creating strategies, and sometimes it’s more important to be functional and efficient than to be right.

Try asking, “What would your ideal morning routine look like?” or “What would a perfect homework day look like for you?” then help them come up with ways to make those visions real.

Help kids operationalize the systems they create. If it’s a plan book, talk about setting intermediary deadlines. If it’s alarms on a virtual calendar, try different sequences of alerts ahead of a due date. Think of your role in this process like that of the training wheels on your kid’s bike. As our children get more sure of their strategies and systems, we can raise the training wheels up until they are no longer needed at all.

Model: Talk about your own systems, when they fail, why they work for you. As I get older, I find I have to write more things down or I will forget them. When I do, I mention this to my kids, and they have even helped me brainstorm ways to get things down on paper before I lose them to the ether.

Encourage Good Study Habits

· **Ensure quiet time in your home.** Multi-tasking is a myth, especially for kids. Shut off the TV, and if they like to play music, studies show that music with lyrics undermines concentration and productivity.

· **Ask your kids what their perfect homework routine might look like.** Help them create that vision. Some kids might want a break after school to blow off pent-up energy, others may want to get the homework done first so they can get on to free play. Let them choose the space, too. Just because you envisioned a central study location in your home when you designed it does not mean it’s going to be their preferred spot.

· **Limit phones during homework time.** Phones are a distraction when they are in the room, even when they are turned off, one study shows. If they are a distraction for adults, with their fully mature executive function skills, they are even more distracting for kids, whose frontal lobes (and the executive function skills that originate there) won’t be fully mature until their mid-20s.

Model: Let kids see you working distraction-free, in an environment that promotes focus. As ever, kids do what we do, not what we say. Work on your projects the way you’d like to see them doing their work.

Plan for Technology Use

Have a plan in place for family tech usage. This can be around minutes, data, or context. If you want family dinners and homework to be tech-free zones, agree to that ahead of time. Then sign a tech contract. Some kids respond to the clarity of a signed contract you can point to for reference. Here are some contracts I love, from Juliana Miner, author of “Raising a Screen Smart Kid” and Devorah Heitner, author of “Screenwise.”

Model: When I ask kids what they'd most like me to convey to their parents at my speaking events, one of comments I hear most often is something like: "If you want us to turn our phones off, or spend less time texting with our friends, then parents should do the same." When we ask kids to make sacrifices, we are not willing to make ourselves, they see us.

Communication Between School and Home

When students, parents and teachers communicate openly and honestly with each other about what's happening at home and in the classroom, everyone can stay focused on the learning.

Keep School-Home Lines of Communication Open
The research is clear: Family involvement and positive home-school communication have been associated with improved grades, positive behavior and attitudes about learning, increased participation, and increased attendance. Start by finding out how your child's teacher would like to be contacted and honor his or her preferences by sticking to that method.

When something comes up, go to the teacher first, and not to the principal. That is unfair to both the principal and the teacher. Besides, the principal most likely was not present in your child's classroom to witness the events in question, so it puts him or her in an awkward position.

Remember the good moments too. Thank teachers for their efforts on behalf of your child. Thanking teachers lets them know that you respect and appreciate what they do and how they do it. I have an envelope full of these notes accumulated over 20 years of teaching Latin, English and writing, and I often refer to them when I'm having a bad day or feeling unappreciated. Gratitude matters.

Model: Don't bash or undermine a teacher in front of the kids. Kids hear what you say about their teachers, and it's essential to preserve the student-teacher relationship at all costs. It can be confusing for kids when parents say negative things about their teachers, just as it's upsetting when one parent speaks ill of the other during a separation or divorce.

Promote Self-Advocacy

Starting as early as kindergarten, children need to be encouraged to speak up, tell adults what they need, and stand up to people who are not treating them the way they want to be treated. Self-advocacy is a key part of building a child's sense of self-efficacy, or the understanding that they have the power to control and change their behavior, motivation, and environment.

When your children come to you to complain about how another child or a teacher treated them, ask what they said or did (or what they plan to say or do) to make sure they are heard and understood. Simply asking this question can help children reframe the situation and consider what they can do to effect change themselves.

Expect children to be a part of home-school communication from the first day of elementary school and increase your expectations for their involvement each year until your child is the main conduit of information between home and school. You can provide support, of course, but somewhere around the beginning of middle school, your child should take the lead.

Get support for your efforts to boost their self-advocacy. Let teachers know you are making this shift so they can support your child's efforts to be more effective in their communication.

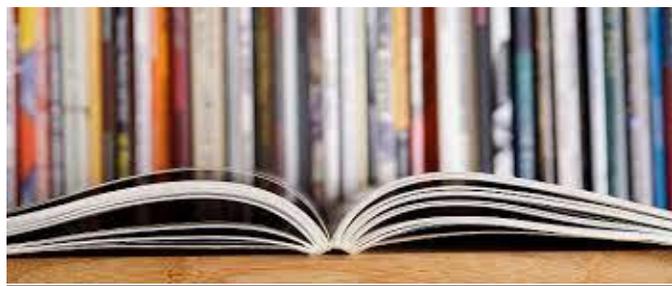
Coach your children through talking with teachers about problems and talk through the approaches they can take. You can write scripts or role play if a child is anxious about the discussion. This can be a fun way to dispel anxiety and play-act the conversation until your child is comfortable.

If children are facing especially stressful challenges because of bullying, special education needs or mental health issues, school counselors can be parents' greatest ally. Today's school counselors are mental health professionals who can guide students in school and provide referrals as needed to other mental health and academic support professionals in the community. They can even direct parents to low-cost or sliding scale providers if needed and ensure continuity between school-based services and outside providers.

Model: Talk about how you ask for help and assert yourself even when it makes you nervous. Explain how you make sure your needs are heard and addressed. If you need to talk to your boss about a misunderstanding at work, make your kid a part of a dinnertime discussion about ways you could approach the conversation. We are, after all, our children’s first teachers when it comes to conflict resolution and self-advocacy.

Upcoming Events:

November 3	Picture Retake Day
November 10	Remembrance Day Ceremony @ 10:30 a.m.
November 11	No School Remembrance Day
November 16	PAC Meeting @ 6:00 p.m.
November 18	Report Card Day
November 21	Parent Teacher Interviews 2:00 p.m.
November 22	Parent Teacher Interviews 2:00 p.m.
November 25	No School – Yellow Day
December 19 – January 2	Christmas Break



Provincial Assessments

January 23	Literacy 10 @ 8:30 a.m.
January 24	Numeracy 10 @ 8:30 a.m.
January 24	Literacy 12 @ 12:30 p.m.
June 19	Literacy 10 @ 8:30 a.m.
June 20	Numeracy 10 @ 8:30 a.m.
June 20	Literacy 12 @ 12:30 p.m.

A Message from the Vice-Principal

Over the first two months of school, we have identified an attendance issue at Sparwood Secondary. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% of school, and chronic absenteeism is where significant academic and behavioural effects have been measured between students missing 10% of school and those missing less. When looking only at unexcused lates and absences (truancy), we have noticed an astonishing trend. **Ninety-four students, approximately 32% of our student population, were unexcused late or unexcused absent from 10% of their classes from September 17, 2022, to October 17, 2022,** a trend that is consistent with other month-long measurements of student attendance.

Listed below are some effects caused by chronic absenteeism, specifically when absences or lates are unexcused:

- Reduced academic achievement
- Significant reduction in math achievement and reading ability
- Feeling of separation and exclusion from peers
- Negative impact on social/emotional development
- Reduced chances of achieving high school diploma or college/university degree
- Less likely to be consistently employed or in education after high school
- Reduced ability for teacher to support, especially in high school as:
 - There is less of a chance of receiving help with complex assignments at home
 - Students have multiple teachers making them less able to find time in the day to catch-up with that specific teacher
- Higher chance of risky behavior, including drug use and criminal activity.

We are seeking to change these habits by implementing an attendance policy, but we also need help from many sides to address this issue. We are asking staff, students, and parents to help address our attendance issues in the following ways:

Staff:

- Encourage students to be on time
- Be accurate with attendance reports
- Promote the importance of being punctual and present
- Work with students and parents to help students get to class on time
- Seek reasons behind unexcused lates and absences in a positive and non-intrusive manner
- Send students to their current course when they arrive late, regardless of the time
- Emphasize that monitoring of student attendance is key to student success and should not be viewed as punitive in nature

Students:

- Do their best to be on time with all their materials for the class
- When arriving late, immediately get a late slip and go directly to class, regardless of the time
- Ask/remind parents to contact the school when there is a reason for being late or absent

Parents:

- Call or use school messenger when your child has a reason for being late/absent
- Promote the importance of being punctual and present
- Work with students and staff members to get students to class on time
- Direct your child to immediately get a late slip then go directly to class, regardless of the time, when they are late

Attendance Policy

We understand that pursuing our attendance issue is not going to be solved overnight. However, we believe this policy will improve student attendance, achievement, and well-being at Sparwood Secondary School. Our attendance policy will **identify students who have unexcused lates and/or absences in 17% of their daily classes over a month-long period**, a standard that would affect just over **16% of our student population** based on the September 17 to October 17 data. As we move forward, this policy will be adjusted to continue to reduce unexcused lates and absences. Listed below are the steps we are looking to take:

Situation	Action Taken
1 st monthly sign of chronic truancy*	<u>Letter home to parents and discussion with student to make student and parents aware of situation.</u> This letter will ask parents to phone the office or use school messenger to clear student absences and lates.
2 nd monthly sign of chronic truancy	<u>Letter home to parents and meeting with student and parents.</u> In this meeting, we will seek to understand the reason(s) leading to consistent unexcused lates and/or absences. We want to work with students and parents to set attendance goals. This letter and meeting will also let parents and students know that further signs of chronic truancy could lead to a suspension.
3 rd monthly sign of chronic truancy	<u>Possibility of a meeting with parents and student based on the circumstances, as well as consequences for the student at school.</u>

Aboriginal Education 2022/2023



Students at Sparwood Secondary School honored Orange Shirt Day on September 29th. Each student was given the opportunity to express their feelings about what makes them feel safe in school, and what Orange Shirt Day means to them. Each of their sentiments were recorded on an orange sticky note which then formed an orange T-shirt on the gym doors. Lots of kids said they feel safe at school because friends, staff and teachers made them feel at home. Another student said, "I feel safe at SSS because I know that I will be treated with respect by everyone". Students and staff then gathered for an assembly where they watched a video and participated in a Kahoot on Truth and Reconciliation, where the top 3 winners received an orange shirt. Sparwood Secondary spent the day remembering that every child matters, and every child should feel.



Outdoor Education

Ms. Traub's Outdoor Education and Contemporary Indigenous Studies classes were able to spend the day at Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park in Alberta. The students viewed and learned about Indigenous rock art and then had the opportunity to explore the hoodoos and local geography. It was a fantastic day!



Athletics

Sparwood Spartans are playing very hard, and all teams have been close to winning their tournaments. They have all made it to the semi-finals and some have made it right to the final game!

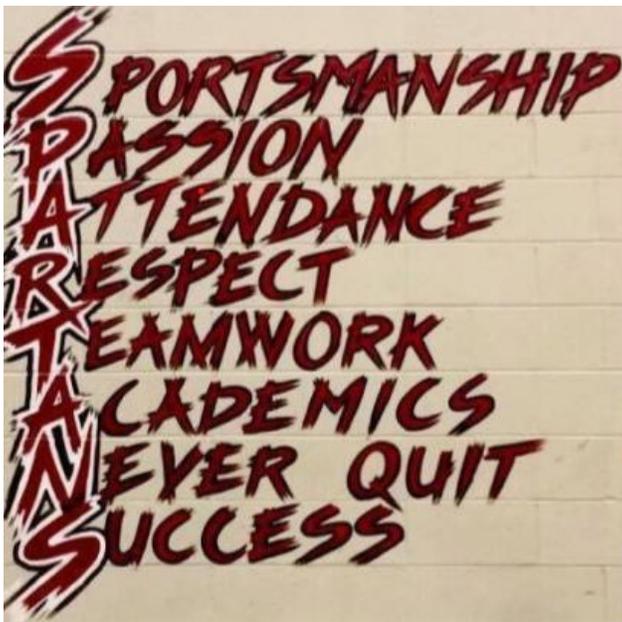
It's great to have the gym open to the public again and to hear the cheers for our teams. Below are the dates of our home games and tournaments. Come and cheer on your Spartans

Junior boys EK's volleyball tournament
Nov 4/5 in Creston



To stay up to date on games and schedules and other important information with Sparwood Secondary School sports, please follow us on Facebook and like our page.

Remember the Core Covenants of our Athletic Program



Safe Arrival

Just a reminder if you haven't done so already sign up for school messenger.

You can find all kinds of info and resources on School Messenger on our District website [https://www.sd5.bc.ca/studentparent/SchoolMessenger/Pages/default.aspx#/=](https://www.sd5.bc.ca/studentparent/SchoolMessenger/Pages/default.aspx#/)

REMEMBER: If you are not receiving e-mail's, please check your junk mail to redirect. E-mails should come from broadcasts@schoolmessengermail.com



PAC

We just held our second PAC meeting this year, and it's great to have parents attend, Principal Mike Kelly and Vice Principal Jason Sommerfeld attended, as well as school trustee Bev Bellina. It is great to have the open discussions, and we look forward to planning a few things for the students. There is still an opening for a treasurer position on PAC, if anyone is interested. Our meetings are the third Wednesday of each month @ 6:00pm in the SSS Library, all parents welcome. Next meeting is Wednesday November 16th. Also join the PAC FB page, Sparwood Secondary School Parent Advisory Council.

As Usual, Mrs. Lowe will be showcasing students' hunting/fishing pictures. If you have a good one from this season, please send it to penny.lowe@sd5.bc.ca (pics without guns please).

PE and Electives Department

Both teachers and students are settling in nicely in their electives and in their PE classes. Gym classes are trying their best to be outside as much as they can while the weather is still nice. Units include Softball, Soccer, Ultimate Frisbee, and disc golf. Students also had the opportunity to play laser tag with Jesse Seiler!



Last month we shared information on the wood working classes firing up the wood mill to produce lumber for future projects. Here are the birdhouses that one of the classes made when they partnered with Teck:



Mr. Larsen's design 8/9 class put on the great Halloween costume swap to contribute to their community by organizing and distributing costumes at the elementary school from October 17 to the 20th. Students created the promotional material, presented to the elementary school, prepared the costumes to sell. They then worked the sale to make certain that all elementary school kids had an opportunity to get a costume for Halloween.

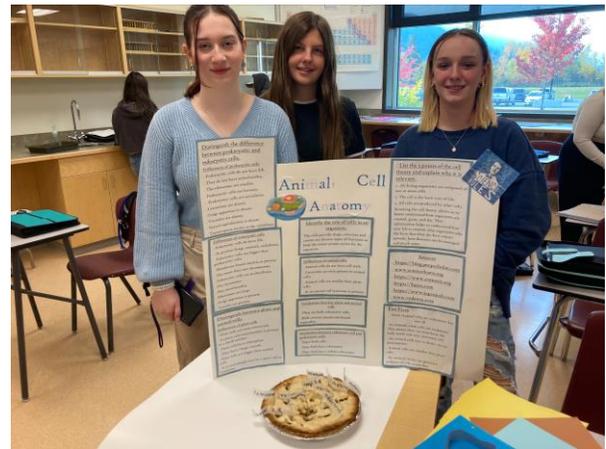


Mrs. Lowe's PE 10-12 class partnered up with Student Council to organize this year's Terry Fox run. Our goal was to raise \$500 and there was a draw to be able to throw a pie at Principal Mike Kelly and Vice Principal Jason Sommerfeld if we met that goal.



Math/Science Department

Ms. Nimmo's Grade 8 Science class was busy created some amazing models of plant and animal cells using a variety of different materials. Students learned about the structure and function of eukaryotic cells including the roles different organelles and the cell membrane play in maintaining homeostasis within the cell.



As Usual, Mrs. Lowe will be showcasing students' hunting/fishing pictures. If you have a good one from this season, please send it to penny.lowe@sd5.bc.ca (pics without guns please).



Math 7 – Pi, The Amazing Ratio!

Grade 7 explored the amazing ratio pi and celebrated the wheel. Students measured the circumference and diameter of many round objects to discover the same ratio each time, 3.14. Through this activity students also made a realisation of the importance of accuracy and precision. Since completing this experience class members can rearrange an equation and use pi to calculate all parts of a circle.



Careers

This month in Careers at SSS the Grade 8's participated in a critical thinking exercise involving cooking eggs, and students also completed self-assessments of their core competencies. Grade 8-9 students collaborated on a community contribution project to facilitate a costume exchange. Through their efforts 73 costumes were re-homed at the elementary school this year. Grade 12's has completed their "Capstone Pitch Sheets" and are getting started on their projects as well as their Careers booklets.



Have a safe and Happy Halloween!