Family Spotlight: Family Focus Group Helps Researchers Develop Family Resources

Last spring, five Children’s School parents participated in a focus group to help researchers from the Office of Child Development (including Milena Nigam, mother of kindergartner Simon) on a project entitled Something Worth Trying: Supporting a Growth Mindset at Home. What follows are excerpts from a summary report the researchers provided to the school, and there is a formal published report enclosed with this newsletter.

“One of the most valuable life lessons a child can learn is to keep trying in the face of challenges and setbacks. When children understand that their progress and learning depend on their effort, and not on their innate intelligence and ability alone, they try harder, they are less anxious about their performance, they learn more, they perform better in the long run, and they are prouder of themselves for the right reasons. Believing that effort and persistence relate to learning potential is considered having a ‘growth mindset.’”

“As identified during our parenting workshops last year, the Something Worth Trying project team believes the following messages embody a growth mindset and are important, applicable, and accessible in today’s parenting of preschoolers and kindergartners:

• Effort is valuable for its own sake, regardless of its outcomes.
• Interest and willingness to participate in activities, learning experiences, and the world around us are capacities that will serve children well throughout life. “Getting in the game” and enjoying the experience of play is much more important than winning.
• Try and try again. Take risks. Embrace both attempts and mistakes.
• Take time to notice and honor the details of your children’s experiences and attempts.”

“In addition, the following practical considerations were raised during our discussions with parents last year on how to effectively communicate the Something Worth Trying messages:

• Parents are busy
• The most effective learning experiences are interactive and are means to strengthen and/or build parent-child relationships.
• Storytelling trumps moralizing.”

“Based on the Something Worth Trying messages and the practical considerations from parents, we envisioned two resources for parents and children:

• The Trying Box—a three-dimensional answer to scrapbooking to place mementos that symbolize things that the child has really tried at, or put effort into.
• The Trying Box book—a picture book for parents to read with young children to accompany the Trying Box, and instruct children and parents in its use.”

January Web Artists

3’s Friends: Grace C.-B., Madeleine P. & Gabrielle W.
4’s Friends: Michael B., Andrew G., Julia G., Anna H., & William S.
Kindergarten Friends: Juliette G. & Annika V.