

Principal's Message

Hello Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

Hope your holidays were thoroughly enjoyed! JES staff wish you all the very best in the coming year. Please be reminded with the winter weather for the next few months, school doors are open at 8:00 a.m. in the morning. Due to the cold weather, please ensure students are dressed appropriately and don't arrive too early. Appropriate dress is important so the students can enjoy the outdoors during recess. If the temperature drops to -25°C or colder, recess will be indoors.

Communicating Student Learning: Interim Reports

On February 8, parents will receive an Interim Report on their child's progress at school. This is another way JES is communicating students learning this year. The Interim Report is a paper-based report that will provide a snapshot of your child's progress and achievement levels in Literacy and Numeracy. Some teachers may also include a section on Integrated Studies to communicate student performance in other subject areas related to a specific inquiry or project. Specialist teachers (Kaska and French Language Teachers, Fine Arts Teacher) will also report on progress. Students will be assessed on learning standards in subject areas using the following descriptors: Not Yet Meeting Expectations, Approaching Expectations, Meeting Expectations, and Exceeding Expectations.

During the October Parent-Teacher Conferences, discussions were centred around the curriculum learning standards in literacy and numeracy and the core competencies of thinking, communicating and personal and social awareness proficiencies that all students need to develop in order to engage in deeper learning and life-long learning. Teachers will be assisting students to report on the core competencies during the year-end summative report. These core competencies are embedded in instruction through all curriculum learning standards.

The core competencies, along with literacy/numeracy foundations and all the other essential content are at the centre of the curriculum redesign and assessment. Core competencies are evident in every area of learning; however, they manifest themselves uniquely in each discipline. In the curriculum redesign, competencies are embedded and evident within the learning standards. Core competencies come into play when students are engaged in "doing" in any area of learning. This includes activities where students use thinking, collaboration and communications to solve problems, address issues or make decisions. The ultimate goal for JES staff is for learners to become competent at employing the core competencies every day in school and in life. The core competencies are an integral part of learning in all curriculum areas. The three core competencies are as follows:

- **Communication** – The communication competency encompasses the set of abilities that students use to impart and exchange information, experiences and ideas, to explore the world around them, and to understand and effectively engage in the use of digital media.

- **Thinking** – The thinking competency encompasses the knowledge, skills, and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific concepts and content and transform them into a new understanding. Thinking competence includes specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind, and metacognitive awareness.
- **Personal and Social** – Personal and social competency is the set of abilities that relate to students' identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. Personal and social competency encompasses the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.

The JES staff has been focusing on communication, thinking and personal/special skills (the three core competencies) in all their lesson planning and student activities. These skills are building blocks of lifelong learning and a growth mindset. A growth mindset is rooted in the understanding that we can strengthen our ability to learn new knowledge to solve simple tasks or complex problems. A student's ability to understand that learning is continual and his/her intellect can be strengthened is very important. This helps and encourages all students to learn new knowledge/curriculum content without frustration. The following information will elaborate more.

Growth Mindset – What's it all about?

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment in the Home

Part 2: Shifting Mindsets

For students who struggle or do not see themselves as “being smart”, and who think that they have a predetermined amount of intelligence, skills, or talents, situations become self-fulfilling prophecies. Because they don't really believe that they can be successful, they will often give up and not put forth effort.

For those students who are advanced learners, they can become consumed with ‘looking smart’ at all costs. They may have coasted through school without really putting forth much effort, yet they are often praised for their good grades and strong skills. Often, bright students with fixed mindsets will avoid situations where they may fail or they may blame outside forces for their failures. (Ricci, 2015)

A shift in mindset is not instantaneous: some people have had a fixed mindset belief for most of their lives. However, recent brain studies have demonstrated that the brain can change, adapt and ‘rewire’ itself throughout our entire lives. This is neuroplasticity; understanding and believing in neuroplasticity is an important part in growth mindset. Making the shift takes effort and time.

Here's a question you might like to ask your child(ren): “When do you feel smart?” If their answer is something like the following, it signifies a fixed mindset: ...when I don't make any mistakes...when I finish something fast and it's perfect...when something is easy for me, but hard for others...) Growth mindset answers would be something like the following; ...when it's really hard and I try hard and I can do something I couldn't do before...when I work on something for a long time and I start to figure it out...How did your child(ren) answer?

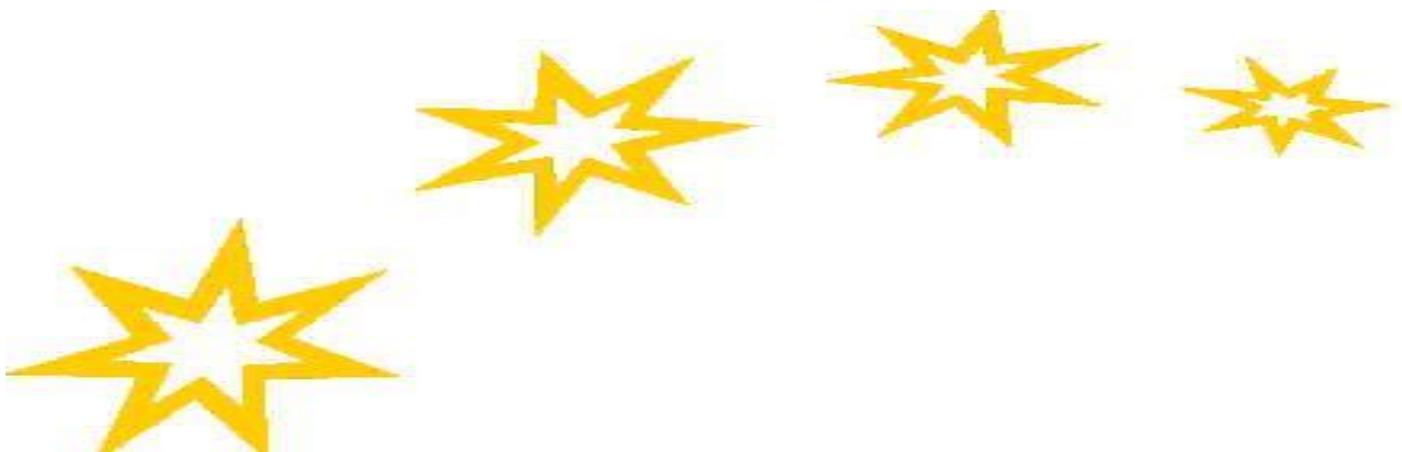
References:

- Dweck, C. (2016). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Ballantine
 Ricci, M. C. (2015). *Ready-to-use resources for mindsets in the classroom; everything educators need for building growth mindset learning communities*. Victoria: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Why Are We Removing Letter Grades?

As you know from past school newsletters and parent-teacher conferences/communications the curriculum redesign will no longer use letter grades from Grade 4 to 9. Here is further information to help you understand about this change:

- Part of why we are changing the curriculum and how we assess students is to help them develop a “growth mindset”, so they understand learning is an ongoing process and activity and not just an accomplishment. This better prepares students for life beyond school, where they need to organize and manage their learning in post-secondary and in their careers,
- Internationally and within Canada, many jurisdictions have already moved or are moving away from letter grades to better support student learning. Yukon is by no means the first or only jurisdiction to make this move,
- Academic research has shown that different types of feedback influence student motivation in learning, and
- Both letter grades and performance descriptions are ways to summarize a student’s achievement based on their work in class; such as tests, assignments and projects. However, letter grades only reflect a student’s current achievement. Performance descriptions provide information about both their current achievement and their learning progress.



Peanut Free School

Because we have students and staff who have severe anaphylactic reactions to peanuts, JES is a peanut free school. We are asking for your cooperation by not sending any peanuts, nut butters, or foods with peanut oil to school for lunches or snacks.

The health and safety of people with allergies are at risk if these products are present in the school. If a person is anaphylactic, it means that there could be sudden allergic reactions which would require immediate medical emergency measures. In people who are severely anaphylactic, exposure does not merely mean ingesting products, it can be through indirect exposure (example, peanut oil contact through touching of objects). This is the reason our school is peanut free.

Protocol

Parents/guardians are encouraged to become active partners in their children's learning. If there are any questions, concerns or encouragements, please call the school promptly. As a first step, a parent/guardian having concerns about behaviour, school programs or his/her child's interactions with a staff member is requested to discuss this concern with the staff member involved. If the concern is not resolved, the parent/guardian or the staff member is encouraged to discuss the matter with the Principal. The Principal may arrange for a meeting with all the concerned parties. If there is still no resolution, the parent/guardian is encouraged to discuss the concern with the Superintendent. If necessary, the parent/guardian may contact School Council to discuss the concern after these initial steps have been taken. Matters will be treated in a confidential manner at all levels. All parents/guardians will be encouraged by the Principal or School Council to follow the correct protocol when problems are brought to their attention. All teachers, principals, council members and parents are expected to discuss their concerns in a courteous, confidential and respectful manner.

Lost and Found

Each year, students lose many articles of clothing. A lost and found box for these items is located beside the JES Foods Room. Please check periodically if your child is missing any articles of clothing.

Polar Games

Polar Games are a fun participation games opportunity for Grade 6 students from throughout the Territory. The Games are held in various Whitehorse schools and the Canada Games Centre. These games include basketball, soccer, handball, curling and bowling.

On Thursday, Jan. 31 and Friday, Feb. 1, the Grade 6 students will be involved in the above activities.

Maker Space

An exciting transformation has taken place at Johnson Elementary School in the old library space. This space is now the hub for designing and creating. By bringing together a focus on literacy and numeracy development, experiential and “hands-on” learning, First Nations ways of knowing and doing and the redesigned curriculum’s Applied Design, Skills and Technologies, we have an incredibly rich opportunity to establish a student-centred, inclusive and dynamic learning space.

Visit the old library space and see the change that has taken place to provide more learning opportunities for our students.

