



School Wide: Social Emotional Learning:

Courage: Courage is the willingness and ability to work through obstacles despite feeling embarrassment, fear, reluctance, or uncertainty (Martinez, 2015). When you practice courage, you make positive choices even when it may be difficult for you. It takes courage to express our feelings, make ethical choices, tell the truth, admit mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and to be kind. This is especially true when others might not be leading by example. Courage requires self-awareness and self-regulation (Greenberg, 2016). Students practice identifying feelings in themselves and others. The “courage” exercises assist students in learning how to help their brains regulate the amygdala by activating the prefrontal cortex (Martinez, 2015).

Gratitude: Students learn that gratitude is mindful thankfulness and the ability to be thankful even when things in life are challenging. When you practice gratitude you feel thankful and want to share that feeling with others (Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2014). Research has shown that the benefits associated with gratitude include better sleep patterns, increased levels of happiness and optimism, a sense of connection to peers and communities, and decreased levels of anxiety and stress (J. Psychosom Res. 2009; Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2014). Gratitude influences sleep through the mechanism of pre-sleep cognitions. These benefits have positive impacts in the lives of students, and they help cultivate safe and thriving classroom cultures. “Gratitude” exercises help students become actively thankful for everyday situations and opportunities (Lomas, Froh, Emmons, Mishra & Bono, 2014). The act of being thankful helps release dopamine, which not only makes students feel good but is also a key neurotransmitter for learning (Wiss, 2014).

Forgiveness: Forgiveness means choosing to let go of anger and resentment toward yourself or someone else, to surrender thoughts of revenge, and to move forward with your personal power intact. Forgiveness has been shown to improve relationships, decrease anxiety and stress, lower blood pressure, lower the risk of depression, and strengthen immune and heart health. Letting go of negative emotions can often have a remarkable impact on one’s physical, mental and emotional health (Chiaromello, Mesnil, Sastre, & Mullet 2008). Students also learn how to forgive themselves if they’ve made a mistake, caused an accident, or hurt someone as a result of their actions (Thompson & Waltz, 2008). Students learn healthy ways to express anger and to calm themselves down. They also learn how their brains and bodies respond to anger.

They practice listening skills to support each other when they feel angry or are having strong emotions.

Compassion in Action: Compassion has two components: the first is empathy, which means putting yourself in someone else's shoes and trying to feel what that person feels, and the second is action, which means helping someone in need and performing acts of kindness without expecting anything in return. Compassion is when one understands how another person feels and takes action to alleviate that person's suffering. Students apply their empathy and communication skills to support one another through compassionate action. Humans are wired for connection and compassion. The activities help students make choices that benefit their minds, hearts, bodies, and relationships.

= **Choosing Love!** 