Think of a child that is special to you and think about what you truly want for them whilst they are at school.

When I talk with parents and teachers about this, amongst the answers are these overwhelmingly common themes.

- Nurture and challenge my child. Expect that they can learn.
- Care for them with sensitivity and forgive them their crazy moments - give them daily chances.
- Help them to love learning and become a lifelong learner.

Creating a climate where learning is seen as purposeful, shared, achievable and expected.

‘Visible teaching and learning occurs when learning is the explicit and transparent goal, when it is appropriately challenging and when the teacher and the student both seek to ascertain whether, and to what degree, the challenging goal has been achieved. John Hattie ‘Visible Learning for Teachers’ 2012

Shaking up our default

Our default refers to ways we behave in classrooms and schools without thinking of their impact on learning - they are part of the culture of our classroom/school and without questioning we continue to behave this way. Our default can sometimes mean that we do not take time to consider what impact (either empowering or limiting) they have on students’ perception of themselves as learners or their learning outcomes.

A Quick Quiz – In the last newsletter I wrote about some practices that accelerate learning. Use this quiz to question yourself about your default.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating scale</th>
<th>3 Consistently</th>
<th>2 Occasionally</th>
<th>1 Not so evident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding Out</td>
<td>Before a unit of learning I find out what students know and would like to know about the topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the learning obvious</td>
<td>I write the learning intention in a place where students can always see it and refer to it.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality examples</td>
<td>My students can refer to a quality example of what I am asking them to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Criteria</td>
<td>The success criteria have been discussed/negotiated with students and they are clearly displayed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social learning</td>
<td>I give students opportunities to talk about the topic and learn in groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive communication</td>
<td>I encourage knee to knee (paired) discussion so all students get to have a say rather than choose ‘one at a time hands up’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Listening</td>
<td>I ask students to report back about what their partner said to ensure higher levels of engagement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release of Control</td>
<td>I model what is expected, guide them through an example and then provide them with the time and opportunity to show me what they can do independent of me every lesson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>I allow for time to reflect in many ways such as small group chat, learning journals, putting examples on classroom walls and whole class discussion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advice I would give my teacher

From students around the Riverina

- Check to see if I already know.
- Ask me about what I am interested in learning.
- Let me learn with my friends.
- Give us more challenging stuff to do.
- Give me a safe way to ask you a question.
- Help me to remember things and make links.
- Please don’t get angry and yell at me.
- Teach me how to learn because I already know what I want to learn.
- Pick me for answers - not always the smart ones. I know stuff, too.

The following YouTube clip helps us understand that students cannot be compared- that each child has their own learning journey.

Animal School

“Pretty much all the honest truth telling there is in the world is done by children”.
Oliver Wendell Holmes

"Pretty much all the honest truth telling there is in the world is done by children”.
Oliver Wendell Holmes
"I am bored. What my teacher needs to know is she should focus on things that we don’t know because that’s when I learn.” Yr 5 Riverina boy

"if we want young people who turn out to be robust and confident learners, we have to talk to them in terms of the growth mindset” Carol Dweck

GROWTH MINDSET MOTTOS

No pain, no gain
I can, can if I try, try, try
When the going gets rough, the tough get going
I don’t know it yet but I can learn it
My effort matters
Practise, practise, practise!

Resource: Improving Student Achievement Toni Glasson.

This is a great resource to help teachers understand the role of assessing for learning.

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HOW2Learn website

Rethinking groups

Extensive research tells us that when we group children across classes (in our schools- most commonly in literacy and maths) we effectively label them and limit their self belief in their ability. It encourages the fixed mindset that ability matters way more than effort. Fluid, flexible grouping, where students get to move in and out of class groups according to their knowledge and ability in the concept you are teaching, is a much fairer and more effective way to group them.

Read the following statements to rethink grouping.

If you take the kids who understand concepts away from kids who are struggling, you are removing multiple opportunities for those students to find out from someone other than you.

LIMITING STUDENTS’ SELF BELIEF
Even students in the ‘top’ class can limit their perceptions- I am smart - I do not have to try. Those students in the ‘bottom’ class know they are there and label themselves accordingly.

LEARNING TIME WASTED
minimum 10 minutes x 5 days x 10 weeks = 500 minutes lost per term- that is 10 extra maths lessons per term!

THEIR EFFORT DOESN’T PAY OFF
It does not matter how hard kids have tried to improve sometimes they get stuck in the same fixed group for various reasons- we don’t regroup until…, that group is too full.

Encouraging the Growth Mindset through powerful language

The way we speak to students and the attitudes we hold about learning can influence how students engage in their learning and their self perception.

- Try using language that gives students the best chance of developing and maintaining a growth mindset
  - If you have to try, you must be learning!
  - Challenge is good for you.
  - I can see you are trying very hard.
  - You succeeded because you worked hard, got help when you needed it and kept going.
  - I am still learning, too
  - You must be proud of how you tried- great effort

- Draw attention to top performers such as Usain Bolt or Michael Jordan (or use anyone to whom kids relate) and speak about their success as being just as much about determination, practice, focus, passion as it is to do with lucky genetics. They were not always that good!

- Praise the action and not the child. Praising students for things that they do have control over (effort, focus, determination, and practice) will empower them to learn and grow.
  For example
  Great running  fabulous reading  great problem solving  clever thinking
  NOT
  Great runner  brilliant reader  you are a natural problem solver  clever child

- Make your praise credible by adding important detail
  - Fabulous reading. I noticed that you were paying attention to punctuation to help your reading sound more fluent.
  - Clever thinking! I liked the questions you were asking yourself- that really helped, didn’t it?

- Don’t compare students, compare progress
  I noticed how much you have improved over time- your progress has been fabulous NOT  You received a better mark; you topped the class this time.

Reference – Encouraging Learning- How you can help your child learn- James Nottingham

Teach them not how to build a boat, but rather instil in them a yearning for the open sea.

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