

# Southdown Curiosities

## For the Love of Words!

Language is the skill that we often take for granted. From the very first cooing sounds, babies and young children develop language at a very fast pace. And it all happens quite naturally. Right? Wrong. Children acquire language through listening, mimicking, and engaging in language rich experiences with their parents and families. The language growth that children make during the critical first years has a lifelong impact. Children who interact in language-rich homes and start school with a large working vocabulary are more likely to be successful in school than those children with limited prior experiences and interactions with print. In other words, it is critical that children are exposed to

books and print from the very start. Research tells us that children with strong word knowledge think more deeply.

Literacy and reading is a main focus in school and we foster conversations that have a deep link to print. These conversations build experiences and vocabulary that increase student's ability to think, connect ideas and make comparisons.

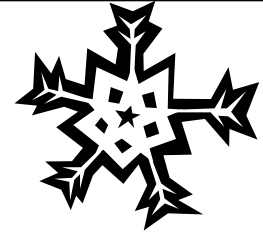
At home, aside from daily reading with your child, there are strategies that you can use that will increase and deepen your child's vocabulary:

- Use as many opportunities as possible to have conversations and model language. Describe items and colors, Think

aloud as you decide what to buy in the supermarket.

- Embed new words in familiar contexts. For example, include the words measure, whisk and scramble into your breakfast routines.
- Use words that are exciting and interesting; this cookie is "scrumptious"!
- Change the language of your daily routines; instead of time to clean up, include organize or arrange.
- Share your stories of your own day, what you did, as well as the funny and interesting things. Allow your child to do the same.

Happy chatting!



### Upcoming Dates:

- 2/28, PTA VIP night, 6:30
- 3/4, Mad Science assembly for grades 2 and 3
- Jump Rope for Heart ,  
Early morning 8:15-9:15  
3/5 for grades 3rd and 4th,  
3/6 for grades K, 1st and 2nd
- 3/7, 7:30PM, PTA meeting
- 3/14, 7PM, Cocoa House
- 3/18, "Kids for President",  
Child's Play production
- 3/21, 7PM, Science Fair
- 3/25, Aesop's Fables  
production for grades 1-4
- 3/26-3/29- School Closed
- 4/11, Grade 2/3 PTA Social
- 4/16, 17,18- NY State ELA  
Assessment for grades 3/4
- 4/19, Report cards go home
- 4/24,25,26- NY State  
Mathematics Assessment,  
grades 3/4

## Simple Steps to Science Fair Success

Our Science Fair is a great event that celebrates inquiry, imagination and fun. And it all begins with a question. This year we will ask that all of our 1st - 4th grade students follow the Scientific Method while our kindergartners can submit a

collection or display.

The Scientific Method:

- Ask a Question
- Do Background Research
- Construct a Hypothesis
- Test Your Hypothesis by  
Doing an Experiment
- Analyze Your Data and

Draw a Conclusion

- Communicate Your Results

Winners from each grade level will be selected to participate at the Brookhaven National Laboratory Elementary Science Fair on May 4, 2013. Good



## Even Geniuses Work Hard

### *Understanding the Work of Dr. Carol Dweck, Ph.D.*

For the past two decades Dr. Dweck has been researching achievement, success and how to foster success. Her work has defined mindset as your belief about yourself and your most basic qualities of intelligence, talents, and personality. There are two types of mindset, the fixed and the growth.

A "fixed mindset" is the belief that our intelligence, talents or personality are what we are born with and there is no opportunity for change. Children with a fixed mindset tend to shy away from tasks that present a challenge, especially when they view the task in terms of what they have been able to

accomplish in the past. Not knowing something is perceived as not having talent or being good at something. A child with a fixed mindset tends to value being smart above all other things and might avoid opportunities to learn, fearful that they won't be successful.

On the other hand, a "growth mindset" is the belief that our most basic abilities, intelligence and talents can be developed through hard work and dedication. Children with this type of mindset are more resilient to new and challenging tasks that stretch their ability. They view complex, challenging tasks as an opportunity to learn.

Parents can help their children develop a positive mindset by being careful to emphasize the effort over the achievement. Instead of praising a child for being "so smart" and "getting it all right", use praise and encouragement by stating how proud you are that they stuck to it, even though it was hard and that with hard work they can be successful. It's important to reinforce that fast learning does not mean best or deepest learning. Students who take longer often understand on a deeper level.

Albert Einstein was considered an average student with a growth mindset, and we know how well that turned out!

## Building a Strong Memory Through Speech and Language

By Sarah Macaluso and Shelley Stockner, Southdown Speech Language Pathologists

**Memory games** give children the opportunity to exercise their brains and help to improve their language and concentration skills as well as their memory. Surrounding children with books, puzzles, and generally providing an enriching environment has been shown to stimulate their developmental growth and capacity for learning. Simple memory games to play with younger children can involve asking which sound matches which animal, or what colors certain household objects are. "What color is a banana, what color

are your socks?" Once your children reach four or five years of age they will enjoy looking at books that challenge them to spot the difference or find hidden items on a page.

### **Other Aids to Memory:**

**Chewing gum** - Crazy as it seems, the evidence suggests that this improves memory while learning! It's about glucose recovery (glucose is fuel for the brain) and the fact that chewing is a rhythmic activity which establishes a steady beat.

**Eating breakfast** - The importance of breakfast has to do with supplying glucose as fuel for the brain each morning. When the fuel runs out, both memory and focus suffer.

### **Moving after learning**

**Having fun** - Emotion and memory are produced in the same brain region.

**Working together** - Cooperative learning improves memory because talking about the learning takes it from short term to long term memory.

**Listening to classical music** (e.g. Mozart) with a steady beat.

## Parents as Reading Partners Minutes Make History!

The theme this year for PARP centered around the Olympics and the challenge of setting a personal goal for minutes of reading each week, and trying to meet or beat it.

Mr. Harrington, the PTA PARP chair, led the competition and provided feedback to all of the classes each week for the leading classes on each

grade level and the students who made the greatest effort to read and log minutes. Of course there were prizes for all and plenty of enthusiasm, especially when all of the teachers from the highest class on each grade level took to the relays during the PARP finale. Who knew that Mr. Dugan could race that

scooter like a champion!

Of course this kind of enthusiasm doesn't happen without parental support. From the parents reading at home to the dedicated PTA volunteers who counted and tracked all of the minutes, it was a group effort that sent a strong message to children that reading is fun!