

ENCOURAGEMENT IS BETTER THAN HARD WORK

Mr. Bruce Miedema - Board President

Would you believe 90% of successful education has nothing to do with content? Some claim this is the case. Maybe the successful education aphorism gets its percentages from the more well-known aphorism about success in general: 10% ability and 90% hard work. So is the other 90% of successful education hard work? If you are a student reading this article you are probably already done and this article is going in the trash can! Well hold on a little longer and read a little further, I hope you will be surprised.

Children, students of all ages, employees – we're all alike, we do what we are told to do, at least our results have to conform to somebody else's expectations. In early childhood parents tell their little ones what to do. Teachers follow a curriculum and the student and teacher are evaluated based on standardized testing results. Employees at all levels are given objectives, quotas, challenges, etc. This still sounds like I (child, student, employee) have to work... to reach that 90% of successful education!

Life is work, it's that way from Adam in the book of Genesis. It's true we can't get away from (hard) work but the perspective I have of the task at hand is influenced by the one for whom I am working. This should be a "cause for pause" in the minds of parents and teachers since both are in authority and under authority. Successful parents and teachers understand that they too have a responsibility to their student to encourage. We (school and home) must encourage our students! It sounds like parents and teachers shoulder that 90% toward successful education – to which the students are high fiv'n and sayin "Yah" and looking to mom or dad to help with the homework! Not so fast!

Encourage(ment) as defined in the World English Dictionary is an interesting word. It means "to inspire (someone) with the courage or confidence (to do something). To stimulate (something or someone to do something) by approval or help; support." I didn't read in that definition anything about parents doing their kid's homework or students working less! The energy is in the words **inspire** and **stimulate** and **approval** and **support**. These words are the stuff of leaders. These are important words that don't fit behind the newspaper, or after the game, or after the nap! These words treat all students with honor, respect and dignity celebrating the attributes with which each has been gifted. These words also recognize weaknesses in ability and character and correctly apply encouragement.

Encouragement gets from a student what raw demand can't. Encouragement generates (powers-up like electric) a sense of belonging, assurance and love. Parents and teachers – what are ways you can/do encourage your student? Do your students understand this? Where do you find encouragement and do you share this with your student? Those of us beyond the home and teacher too can encourage the students and teachers at ECS by our support, involvement and attendance at school events.

A NEW FACE

As most of you have seen or heard, Eastside has added a new face to their staff, and that new face is me! My name is Amy Westing, and I will be teaching Kindergarten and Pre-K next school year. This second semester I have been teaching the Pre-K program and am working with most of the other students Friday mornings. I have taught Preschool for the past 7 years, and am looking forward to not only teaching Pre-K again next year here at Eastside, but also Kindergarten! I am slowly getting to know all of the Eastside faces and am blessed to call them my school family. The Lord is faithful in all His ways, and He has shown me His place for me here at Eastside! May God continue to bless Eastside and use it for His glory.

In Christ,
Miss Amy Westing



A SPORTS PERSPECTIVE

Mr. David Mahtani (4th-6th Grade)

My classroom was silent. Every student was sweating profusely and breathing heavily, but it was uncomfortably silent. I didn't get a single positive vibe. Nothing terrible had happened. In fact, my students had been laughing and running round a couple minutes earlier. But the time was 2:55 pm, on a Thursday afternoon. We had recently finished P.E. class. The activity to blame: competitive sport.

Each of my students is fairly athletic, but almost all of them were feeling frustrated that afternoon. And though all were sulking, each had a slightly different reason for his or her discontentment. If you participate in athletics or really know those who do, you'd understand the variety of feelings in my classroom that afternoon.

My students held five common sentiments which have left many, if not most, athletes frustrated. (1) Whether they would admit it or not, a couple of my most athletic students lacked peace of mind because they did not beat or play better than the others whom they thought they trumped in athletic status. (2) Some were dissatisfied losers. They define success as winning and failed in that respect. (3) Those with more estimable goals had a sense of guilt because they didn't feel like they did their best: they could have played harder or made fewer mistakes that day. (4) Others didn't care much about the sport itself but coveted the athletic ability of those around them. (5) And finally, the rest were worried about their popularity: whether they played well enough or made few enough shameful mistakes for others to still see them as decently athletic. What was I to do with all this disgruntlement?

Well, I don't think these feelings are restricted to kids or even to sports. We've struggled with many of these frustrating feelings as adults. We often feel discontent, covetous, ashamed, or even guilty after having worked hard to perform a task successfully, especially when there's any sort of competition involved. And we have to put these feelings at bay in ourselves or in our children before we or they are able to move on.

A couple of familiar perspectives have helped my students and me to a certain degree. One is to focus on doing our best. "Just do your best," we often tell our children. However, how often have we tried to do our best, and still later felt we could have done

better? In fact, it's easy for us to think, "If I did play my best, I would have won." I know I usually still lack peace after trying to do my best.

We may also have tried telling ourselves, "Just have fun." However, don't we still feel like there's something missing with that perspective? Don't we feel like we're merely distracting ourselves from the obvious goal of winning or doing well, which then often escapes our grasp and leaves us discontent once again? This perspective may work for some temporarily, but we know there is more to sports than having fun.

Now, I don't think I've found the universal solution to our dissatisfying performances, but someone once gave me a perspective that I thought I'd share with you. It has powerfully satisfied my soul. I don't remember exactly where I heard it, but wherever I heard it, I remember feeling a wave of peace sweep over me. The person said, "Simply, be faithful." In other words, don't try to win, don't try to be better than others, don't merely try to have fun, don't try to be popular, don't covet another's time and talents, and don't even try to do your best. Simply, be faithful. This perspective soothed me as an athlete, and it still soothes my frequently dissatisfied mind today. We simply have to work or play as faithful stewards of God's talents. We don't have to compare ourselves to others. When others are doing well around us, we don't have to covet or feel guilty. All we need to do is perform faithfully: according to the time, talents, and resources God has given us. That's what God requires (1 Corinthians 4:2). We don't have to do any better.

Then, when we're faithful with our talents, we ought to hear those simple, reassuring words, "Well done." Have we been faithful? Have we performed according to what has been given to us? "Well done," says our Father, "Enter thou into joy!" (Matthew 25:21).

Next time my students need direction about how to be successful in P.E. class, I hope they will hear the words, "Be faithful." And if they have worked according to their talents, I hope that joy will replace their moodiness when they hear the words, "Well done, faithful one, well done."

PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

Mr. Pete Adams

We (the 7th and 8th grade boys and I) recently had the privilege of being one of thirty area schools to be invited to a question and answer session with Madeleine Albright, the first woman Secretary of State. She was appointed in 1996 when President Clinton was in office. In my opinion, we were the best dressed school group there. You may judge for yourself.

Madeleine showed herself to be a very capable lady, who fielded a variety of questions from students 7th grade to college. She was introduced with the use of the word “eminence”, meaning prominence or superiority. Though others treated her that way, to her credit she seemed to understand herself as an ordinary person.

Some of the remarks by the boys included:

“Dr. Albright was very funny. She seemed to be able to talk without thinking.” (let’s hope she pondered a little more while in office) “She had an answer to every question.”

“Dr. Albright was very inspirational in what she said and what she did throughout all her life.”

“It was great meeting her. She was a whoot!” (spelling?)

We pray regularly in our devotion time for those whom the Lord has placed over us in the government. We pray for their salvation and that they might rule righteously so that God’s people may lead a quiet and peaceable life. We are thankful for the opportunity we had to receive a glimpse of one who functioned in high places.

I couldn’t help think of the use of the word “eminence” and the aura that was attempted to be placed around her. In contrast, as Christians we live before the King of Kings, Whose radiance literally floors those who are in His presence. Even so, we may always enter into His presence to be heard personally. May we honor and obey and glorify Him Who loved and gave Himself for us.

AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY

Eastside students pose with Dr. Madeleine Albright at the Gerald R. Ford Museum.

FUN FACT: Albright is known for her collection of pins, and during her term in office she would wear a unique pin each day that made a personal or political statement about the current day’s meetings, sometimes a subtle message to foreign leaders showing her approval or disapproval of their policies. We were pleased to see her wearing an eagle pin on the day the Eastside Eagles were in the audience.



TAKING AN INSIDE LOOK

Taking an Inside Look at Four Programs Eastside Christian School Teachers Use to Assess, Monitor, Motivate, and Enrich Reading and Math Skills

By Mrs. Miedema (1st Grade) and Mrs. Thompson (2nd-3rd Grade)

At Eastside, it is our desire that our students become lifelong readers and learners. One way we have encouraged reading at Eastside is through the use of the web-based program Accelerated Reader (AR). This is a comprehension monitoring system as well as a motivational program. Students choose and read books at their own reading level and take comprehension quizzes on these books. Through this program, we have access to over 150,000 quizzes on both fiction and non-fiction books. By taking these quizzes, students are monitored for comprehension and adjustments can be made moving students up or down reading levels as needed. Students receive points for each quiz taken based on the difficulty of the book read and their level of success in the quiz. At the end of the year prizes are given to each student who participates based on the points they have accumulated during the year. On March 1, Eastside will be participating in Accelerated Readers' "Read the Most From Coast to Coast." The number of quizzes taken nationwide in one day will be tallied to see if they can top last year's one day 3,581,992 quiz record!

Reading A-Z is another program that we are using here at Eastside. This website is new to us this year and already we have found it very useful. As teachers we are using the tools available to us on this site to quickly determine reading levels of students as well as track the progression of their reading ability. We can also print a wide variety of "mini-books" for students to read from levels A-Z. These levels are approximately Kindergarten through Fifth Grade levels of reading. It is fun for students to monitor their own progress through these levels and feel the satisfaction of moving to the next level. This site is also full of wonderful lesson plans for teachers to use covering everything from letter sounds and phonics

rules to comprehension strategies. We have just begun to enjoy the benefits of this website.

Not only are we interested in improving our students' reading skills, we are also very interested in seeing our students excel in math. Near the end of last school year we did a one month trial of a math program called IXL Math. This program provides lots of math practice for students ranging from Pre-K through Algebra and Geometry. Our students and parents gave enthusiastic feedback on this program so we adopted it for use here at school this year. This program has provided much additional practice for our students as they are working their way through the school year. In First Grade we are nearing 5000 problems solved on IXL. For 5 students that's a lot of extra practice! The beauty of this program is that it provides students with extra practice in a new and fun way. Students can access this site at home when they have free time as well as during the summer when parents would like them to keep up on their skills. There is some catchy motivation built into this program as well. Students earn prizes and medals online as they answer questions and master skills. We hope our students make time for this great opportunity to improve their math skills.

We have implemented a new standardized testing system at Eastside this year. The AIMSweb system is a computer-based benchmark testing system and progress monitoring tool administered by teachers. School districts across the U.S. use this testing system. The tests are administered three times throughout the year: fall, winter, and again in the spring. So far this year we have administered the reading and math assessment tests in the fall and again in January. In the future we will also administer Social Studies testing. The tests give an informative snapshot of each student's reading and math abilities. The results of the AIMSweb assessment allow teachers to plan for further instruction, consider student placement, and monitor student ongoing progress. The reading assessment test is given by a teacher, one student at a time. During the test, the student reads three passages aloud for

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FROM THE PROMOTERS

You are invited to attend ***What Wondrous Love***, an Easter concert commemorating the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Musicians are Eric & Crista Phelps (cello & piano) and Jared Langerak (organ), with special guests Michelle Pipe (voice) and Terri VandeVegte (cello & bass).

The concert will be held **Saturday, March 23 at 7:00 PM at First PRC (Grand Rapids)**. A dessert reception will immediately follow.

EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL PRESENTS

What Wondrous Love

COMMEMORATING THE PASSION, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

TAKING AN INSIDE LOOK *continued ...*

one minute each. Students then take a passage with missing words (example: The dog (ate, chased, ran) the cat.) and identify the appropriate words to complete the selection. This is also timed. First graders are also assessed on letter and word recognition and other early literacy skills. This testing gives teachers a periodic check on students' reading development. Just like regular check-ups with the doctor are vital to monitor physical growth and health, reading growth is also vital, and a reading "check-up" will help measure their reading development. For the math testing, students are given two timed paper-and-pencil tests – one assesses computation skills, and the other assesses knowledge and ability covering a variety of math concepts and applications. First graders also take a test on early numeracy skills and identification. Administration and scoring of the tests is easy and informative. We are excited to compile and compare these latest scores with the fall scores!

We asked our students what they thought about the assessment and enrichment programs we have this year. Here are some of their comments.

AIMSweb Testing

- "It gets easier every time."
- "It makes me nervous."
- "It is good."
- "I like AIMS testing because it is fun, and we get to read to our teacher. It is my favorite!"
- "I like the math concept problems best."
- "I think AIMS is good because it shows what you have learned."
- "Timed reading to the teacher is fun."

Accelerated Reader (AR):

- "It (the quiz) is quite easy if you read the book."
- "It is great! I love the books!"
- "I like the tests. They are super easy!"
- "I think AR helps me read."
- "I think AR is good because we can take tests on our books. I like getting prizes at the end of the year."
- "I like AR because we can take a quiz."
- "I think that AR is fun because you get points, and at the end of the year you can get prizes."
- "AR helps me read more books!"

A-Z Reading Program and Testing

- "It has great books!"
- "I have fun with these books!"
- "I like A-Z because it is fun to read out loud, and the stories are fun."
- "A-Z helps me learn more about things."
- "Timed reading to the teacher is fun."
- "I like the Amazon Rainforest book we read a lot."

IXL Math

- "IXL teaches me great things."
- "Sometimes IXL is hard, but I learn more."
- "Sometimes it is fun."
- "I think IXL helps me in math."
- "I like IXL because it helps me with my math."
- "I like it because you get medals and prizes."
- "I think that IXL is fun because you get awards."
- "IXL is a good online math program. I like doing math on the computer."

Eastside Parents: We would love to hear from you. How do you like these programs?

READING MONTH



February is Reading Month at Eastside Christian School, which means the classrooms and hallways are buzzing with excitement. Our theme this year is "Reaching for the Stars;" challenging the students to set their reading goals high and achieve them. Many stars are placed in the hallway at the top of the wall. For each book that a child reads, a "cut out" of an arm and hand is placed on the wall with the student's name on the hand and the book's title on the arm. The children are so excited to see their name on the wall that it soon becomes a competition. This proves to be a unique way to engage the children to read great books!

I asked the children what reaching for the stars meant to them, and this is what they shared:

- * To accomplish great things
- * To do my best
- * Use the talents that God gives me
- * Read a lot of books so when I'm older I will be smart
- * Don't be lazy
- * Do more than is expected
- * Try very hard
- * Accomplish my goals
- * SCORE!

- Mrs. Karen Ophoff